Applying Historiography To Fictional Works: A Case Study Of William Inge's Picnic

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APPLYING HISTORIOGRAPHY TO FICTIONAL WORKS:
A CASE STUDY OF WILLIAM INGE’S *PICNIC*

by

NICHOLAS A. MURPHY
B.F.A. Emerson College, 2010

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ABSTRACT

Historiography is the writing of history based on the examination of sources and synthesizing these sources into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods. Historiography is not the study of history but rather provides a tool to analyze each written account of a historical event. The concepts of historiography are traditionally reserved for the study of factual based history and not for fictional events or people. However, just as history seems to evolve over time, authors also revise their fiction work.

If history is adapted and changed over time to fulfill the historian’s desires, can fictional works also be adapted to better fulfill the author’s intentions through the process of rewrites? Historiography allows us to understand that history is adapted and changed over time. Can the ideas of historiography be applied to fictional stories in order to understand why an author rewrites and revisits older works? How can a theatre practitioner understand and develop the most comprehensive version of a fictional text? Can he apply the same techniques used to deconstruct a historical event?

Through a case study using William Inge’s classic play Picnic I explored the possibility of using historiography as a tool for theater practitioners in developing new dramatic texts that synthesize various scripts into one new comprehensive text. Through this case study I developed a framework which allows the theatre practitioner to apply the ideas of historiography to the analysis of a collection of fictional works by the same author in order to create a new text, showcasing the effectiveness of applying four cruxes of historiography to fictional texts.
This work is dedicated to my parents for their constant love and support of both my educational and artistic pursuits. This work truly encapsulates all you have inspired me to be and to follow my dreams.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How does a historian collect and record history? Does he rely on first-hand accounts or develop his own unique interpretation of previously written history? If he relies on his own interpretation, does this mean the history of an event may change slightly over time so a new account of an event is created? All these questions can be answered through the idea of historiography, which according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is “the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods.” Historiography is not the study of history but rather provides a tool to analyze each written account of a historical event. Looking at the same event, a reader might find several different interpretations of what may have happened; the sequence of the events could be different; the motivations for historical figures could change; and even the heroes and villains in historical battles could change. Historiography allows the reader to identify what changes occurred about specific historical events and why those changes might have occurred. These changes have occurred for multiple reasons; some of the reasons include the historian’s own personal history and opinions as well as the social/political climate of the time period in which a history is written, these reasons affect how history was captured. Historiography allows one to develop a more comprehensive version of a historical event by synthesizing accounts from various historians. Unfortunately, history is not the actual event but merely a reinterpretation of the event; even when a historian is writing a first-hand account, it will not be as unbiased or truthful as witnessing the event in real time.
The concepts of historiography are traditionally reserved for the study of factual based history and not for fictional events or people. However, just as history seems to evolve over time, authors also revise their fiction work. When creating a story, the author can be inspired by the people or places he has encountered in his life or it can be created from his own imagination. The former can inspire the author to, in essence, create a history of his life while the latter, though coming from his imagination, can still have autobiographical elements because it is subconsciously affected by his own personal history. Similar to how a historian writes history, an author develops a story based on what happened in his life or imagination. Through this process they often embellish their own history or add or remove elements. Both authors and historians create texts which follow their own personal desires as well as societal expectations. This explains why there can be very different interpretations of the same historical event. If history is adapted and changed over time to fulfill the historian’s desires, can fictional works also be adapted to better fulfill the author’s intentions through the process of rewrites? Historiography allows us to understand that history is adapted and changed over time. Can the ideas of historiography be applied to fictional stories in order to understand why an author rewrites and revisits older works?

When books or plays are adapted from one language to another, minor and major differences in the tone and story could arise. Books and plays can also be rewritten by their author or adapted by other authors and the story will experience change over time. So how can a theatre practitioner understand and attempt to develop a more comprehensive version of a fictional text? Can a theatre practitioner apply the same techniques he uses to understand a historical event? How can the ideas of historiography be applied to the analysis of a collection of
fictional works by the same author? By applying the historiography cruxes, can a new text be developed that provides a more comprehensive view of the text? But how does one develop this comprehensive version of the story and how can one determine whether it fulfills the author or playwright’s intention? The framework of historiography can be a valuable tool the writer/director can use to develop this comprehensive version. Through a case study using William Inge’s classic play, Picnic, I explore the possibility of using historiography as a valuable tool for theater practitioners in developing new dramatic texts that synthesize various scripts into one new comprehensive text.

Before continuing, it is necessary to define what is meant by comprehensive version of a fictional text. This term is used to describe a new text that is a synthesized version of multiple versions of the same fictional story written by the same author or playwright. For example, some playwrights never seem to be truly finished with a play; they are constantly revising their work throughout their own writing process as well as during the rehearsal process and even after. William Inge was one of those playwrights who was never quite satisfied as can be seen by his multiple versions of Picnic. Many of Inge’s most famous works were reimagined versions of his previous plays or were earlier versions of later less successful and less recognizable plays, very similar to Tennessee Williams’ process. In fact, Picnic, Inge’s most recognized play, fits both categories. It was both a reimagined version of his earlier one act play, Front Porch, and it was also later rewritten into a Broadway failure, Summer Brave. What I consider to be the comprehensive version of these scripts is a new dramatic text in which the audience develops a fuller understanding of the author’s story. This new text is created by evaluating and showcasing the similarities and differences in the various versions in order to develop a text which attempts
to fulfill the playwright’s intention as well as meet audience expectations. This new text tries to determine, by using historiography, what the playwright’s intention was with each script in order to understand why certain elements of a script may have changed overtime. What forced the changes? Was it the playwright’s, director’s or audience’s intention? In order to begin this analysis of fictional works, we must determine which historiography cruxes can be applied to fictional works.

In order to understand historiography, it is important to understand what constitutes a historical event. I will be using Thomas Postlewait’s article, *Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes*, to develop my model of historiography to apply to fictional texts. Postlewait defines a historical event as “any single, significant occurrence, large or small, that took place in the past” (159). While it may be easy to select a specific historical event, understanding what actually happened is more difficult because important questions arise about how the historical event was perceived and written. When constructing the history of an event, historians must rely on documents and reports about the event; however, these documents are not the actual event itself. As Postlewait argues, the documents “meanings are potential rather than received, not only because the historian cannot avoid interpretation but because the identity of the event depends in part upon how it was constituted as a separate occurrence in the documentation itself” (160). Even if the historian experienced the event first hand, his own interpretation will affect how the history is recorded. With these documents and reports about the event, the historian must then construct the history of the event which can either be interpreted in accordance with the documents or offer a new interpretation, “the event is made, not simply found” (Postlewait 161). Every event is open to different descriptions and none is fully complete
but rather a partial perspective of the event itself, “but not a complete and final description” (Postlewait 162). A reader must analyze multiple historians’ perspectives of the event in order to determine the most accurate and full description of that event.

Postlewait describes twelve cruxes he believes readers need to apply when analyzing written history. I propose that four of these cruxes can be applied to the analysis of fictional texts in creating a new dramatic text. The four cruxes are (1) initial motivations of the writer, (2) survival of original documents, (3) value system of the original era, and (4) reader/audience interpretation. The first crux prompts the reader to analyze the causes, motivations, aims, and purposes of the initiating agent of a historical event. When documenting an event, a historian must understand the intentions and biases of the people who actually saw the event and what their intentions were in writing the first-hand account of the event because historians “must find out what they thought in order to understand their actions and plans” (Postlewait 163). Their records of the event are the first attempts to write history. In the case of a fictional text, the author becomes the initiating agent as he creates the story he will be constructing. Readers must understand why the author was inspired to initially write his story. Did he want to reveal something from his past, spark a conversation, or simply create something that would have mass appeal? All these questions will affect what the author wrote. Directors can apply this idea when developing a new comprehensive text because it is important to understand the playwright’s motivations and goals within each version of the script in order to better understand how to incorporate each script into the new text, highlighting the playwright’s desires and providing the audience with the most thorough account of the fictional event.
The second crux that can be applied to fictional works provides assistance for analyzing the conditions that affect the preservation and subsequent survival, however piecemeal and random, of the documents of record. Postlewait warns that “we need to consider, therefore both how and why some documents survive and get used while others do not” (171). As a playwright rewrites his script, why do certain scenes survive and others do not? Also, if the playwright offers multiple versions of the same story, as with *Picnic*, why are some versions of that story produced more than others? Is one text more popular than other versions of the same story? Did certain scripts provide a more fulfilling ending? Did the success of the initial run affect which version of a script is more popular today? Were the other versions of the story not produced as much because of a flaw in the story or writing? When writing this new text it is important to concentrate on understanding what the playwright intended and try and determine if his ideas in each piece were popular or if the playwright’s original ideas were overshadowed. This crux allows the writer/director of the new text the ability to determine what parts of the script may have been modified to suit the desires of the audience or the director rather than the playwright’s.

The third crux allows the writer to understand that the codes, values and cultural system of the historian’s time period will shape our understanding of the text. Each historian’s writing will be affected by his social and cultural system. This idea also can be applied to fictional works because the playwright may have desired to write about something, but because of societal pressures he was unable to or had to modify what they meant or hide it within the text. This is an important concept to understand because our modern perspective may be different than that of the author, and in a new text the new writer can clarify ideas that may have been hidden in the text due to social constraints of the playwright’s era.
The final crux that can be applied to fictional texts allows the writer/director to understand that the formations, assumptions, values, and expectations of each person who reads history attempts to understand what is written about the event. As Postlewait states, “no matter how cunning the historian directs and controls the reader’s understanding, the reader always adds to, subtracts from, modifies, and even nullifies what the historian writes” (178). As we read history, we are bringing our own opinion and outside knowledge which will affect how we interpret it, similarly to the historians’ owns values and assumptions affecting their interpretation of first hand documents. The reader is then thrice removed from the event; “reading readings that are readings of readings of an event. The first reading is the document; the second reading is the historian’s interpretation of the document; and the third reading is our own interpretation of the historian’s report” (Postlewait 177). Similar to how a reader brings his own ideas to an account of a historical event, audience members are also going to bring their own background and ideas to a production, which will give each production and performance a unique meaning both for the performers as well as for the audience. No matter how decisive the playwright writes and no matter how close a director tries to fulfill the playwright’s intention, the audience’s own interpretation of the play can drastically change its meaning. This idea must be considered when creating a new text because it will remind the writer to allow room for interpretation in the new text.

These four cruxes provide a basis on which to examine the possibility of using historiography as a lens to create a new comprehensive text from multiple existing scripts with the same storyline. To determine whether this is a working possibility, I will apply each of these four cruxes to the three different texts of Picnic to understand the reasons behind the differences
and similarities of each script in order to create my new comprehensive version of the story. I will also explore why Inge altered elements of the storyline overtime, I will explore these cruxes in detail for each script that I used to create my new text to showcase why specific sections were combined, added to, deleted or modified in my new version.
CHAPTER TWO: CREATING A NEW TEXT

Inge’s play, *Picnic*, is one of his most famous works; however, it also has several incarnations. The same storyline which appears in *Picnic* was previously seen in his play *Front Porch* and his later play *Summer Brave*. These three Inge plays provide the perfect case study to explore how the idea of historiography can be applied to theatrical texts when creating a new dramatic text. When trying to develop a new text that combines elements of these three scripts, it is important to ask questions such as how and why did Inge reimagine the same story into three different scripts? Was it his choice? Was it the director’s choice? Or was it changed to better suit the audience? In addition to his own three scripts, the same story was also adapted for the screen, *Picnic*, and into a musical *Hot September*. How does a playwright reimagine his same story over and over? Is he creating a new story each time or is he creating another historical perspective of the same fictional event? Also, a director can create a new interpretation of the play, in the way it is staged and conceived, which transforms the script into a new text. But what methodology can the director use to create a truly unique version? These questions can be answered with the cruxes of historiography outlined in the previous chapter.

Before discussing my use of historiography, it is important to clarify why I was inspired to create this new text and what my intentions were. My concept was to develop a new text for my own production of *Picnic* in April 2012 at Orlando Shakespeare’s Mandell Theater. This production allowed me to test the successes and failures of my methodology, which is discussed later in Chapter 7. My concept combined elements of Inge’s *Picnic, Summer Brave* and *Front Porch*. This concept was inspired through research about Inge’s intentions and feelings about his play *Picnic*. 
Inge’s first version of the Picnic story, Front Porch, was a sketch about five women living in a small Midwestern town. Inge revised Front Porch into Picnic. Picnic added the male characters in order to provide a dramatic arc to the play. As Baird Shuman discusses in his book on Inge, while this revision was commercially successful on Broadway, Inge was not satisfied with it; he especially did not like the ending. During the rehearsal process Inge changed Picnic’s ending based on his director’s recommendation (Johnson 41). Due to his lingering dissatisfaction, Inge revised Picnic into what he considered to be the final version of the play Summer Brave. Inge wrote in the preface to Summer Brave that:

I have written before that I never completely fulfilled my original intentions in writing Picnic before…I wrote what some considered to be a fortuitous ending in order to have a finished play to go into rehearsal…a couple of years after Picnic…I got the early version out of my files and began to rework it…Summer Brave [was] the result…I prefer it to the version of the play that was produced, but I don’t necessarily expect others to agree…[but] it does fulfill my original intentions (Inge x)

Inge’s new version, Summer Brave, was produced on Broadway, but it was poorly received by audiences and critics. It particularly interesting that Inge kept revising the same story over and over, which inspired me to revisit Thomas Postlewait’s article about historiography mentioned above. Inge’s revision process can be seen as very similar to the way history is written by different authors, which offers diverse interpretations. With three different versions of Inge’s story, I wondered if one could create a text that attempts to present the aspects Inge preferred in each version of the script and provide the audience with the most comprehensive account of the story of Picnic in a way that hopefully Inge would be pleased with. Postlewait pointed out that when you “change the model, [you] change the meaning” (159). This alteration in model is similar to Inge’s reconstruction of the same story in three different plays. Even though Picnic is
fictional, these alterations and reconstructions of history through language Postlewait as discussed inspired my ideas for the concept of this new dramatic text.

For my text, I wanted to blend four versions of Picnic into one cohesive script, utilizing Picnic as my base text and layering in scenes or songs from: Front Porch, Summer Brave, Hot September (a musical version of the Picnic story – not written by Inge), as well as adding my own original adjustment/additions to the play. That this blending would provide an interesting, thought-provoking text which would hopefully satisfy Inge’s desires for the ending of the play while also fulfilling what audiences have come to expect when they read or see Picnic.

I was drawn to a new interpretation by Inge’s dissatisfaction with Picnic. Inge did not like the final version of Picnic and, unfortunately for him, Picnic has become what audiences expect to see, not the more realistic, less romantic ending of Summer Brave which Inge preferred. Audiences were dissatisfied with the unhappy ending seen in Summer Brave. My new text aims to solve this disconnect between the playwright’s desire and the audience’s expectation by creating a new “history” of the same fictional event. The new ending showcases both Picnic’s happy ending and Summer Brave’s sad ending. It allows the audience to decide for themselves which ending actually occurred rather than the director forcing a happy ending (Picnic) or the playwright writing a sad, depressing ending (Summer Brave). After seeing both perspectives, it is the audience who chooses whether Madge leaves or stays.

In order to blend these multiple scripts together, I developed the idea of using multiple perspectives simultaneously through the overall frame of a radio program. I was fascinated to learn from my research about the transition from radio to television, and I thought it would be interesting to explore this transition from a radio personality’s perspective. For my text, the radio
personality was going be Madge, ten years after her departure at the end of the play. She is
working at a radio station as a singer and this is her last day on the air. Since it is her last day,
she looks back on her life. Through this “dream-like” lens, we will be transported back into the
world of Picnic. As Madge remembers her life, she sees the different ways it either played out in
reality or in her imagination. These remembrances happen simultaneously, each version of
Picnic will be a different way of viewing the same event. I wanted Madge to sing songs from
Hot September and a selection of popular 1950s songs, such as those sung by Ruth Brown. The
songs Ruth Brown performed both conveyed the mood I was trying to achieve and had very
relevant lyrics. The musical underscore would help with transitions from memory to memory as
well as establish the overall mood for the production. The climax of Madge’s memory takes
place at the end of Picnic when she decides whether or not to leave. The reader would experience
her departure with Hal as in Picnic or her decision to remain alone as seen in Summer Brave. The
audience would be left with the choice to decide which ending they find more appropriate as
Madge sings her final song and signs off the air.

While my original concept contained the idea of the radio show, I decided to change that
idea, as well as my idea to incorporate Hot September. Before discussing how I used
historiography to select pieces of each text, some history about Inge is necessary, this will assist
in discovering various intentions within each script.

Inge was born in Independence, Kansas on May 3, 1913. His Midwest upbringing
becomes a very distinctive aspect of Inge’s work. He was the first American playwright to write
about small-town life in the Midwest. All four of his early plays are set in towns that are very
similar to Independence. His father was a traveling salesman, and he had a close relationship
with his mother. His childhood in Independence gave him “a knowledge of people and a love of people” (Inge Center 1). Inge’s writing career began to take shape in the 1940’s. He became a drama and music critic where he met and became friendly with Tennessee Williams. Inge’s characters were the people he had grown up around; he recalls, “when I was a boy in Kansas, my mother had a boarding house. There were women schoolteachers living in the house…I saw their attempts, even as a child, I sensed every woman’s failure. I began to sense the sorrow and the emptiness in their lives and it touched me” (Inge Center 2). He wrote knowingly of the dynamics of neighbors, friends and family members in these small towns. Picnic truly capitalized on his youth as it depicted “the simple pleasures and hidden frustrations of provincial life” (Teachout 72). While his childhood provided profitable material, his success did not last. He began to fall out of favor with critics. He also struggled with his sexuality, which may have changed his views on love and romance as he continued to write, and in 1973 he committed suicide. His plays have continued to be produced throughout the years but they have never reached the popularity that they had in the 1950s.

Now that Inge’s personal history and the ideas of historiography have been explored, we can begin to examine each script which was used to develop my new text. My original production concept had to be modified due to the script resources that were available. I had originally intended to use the musical Hot September; however, I was unable to find the book for the musical; I was only able to find a recording of the soundtrack. I decided this was probably better since I did not know how Inge felt about the musical; it would be better not to include a script that was not written by Inge or a script he had not passed an opinion. The next several chapters will detail each of Inge’s scripts starting with the earliest version, Front Porch, and
discuss how I applied the four cruxes of historiography to each one in order to develop my new dramatic text entitled *William Inge’s Picnic*. 
CHAPTER THREE: FRONT PORCH

*Front Porch* was originally a one-act play with only five of the female characters who would later appear in *Picnic*. Inge wrote *Front Porch* early in his career and later decided to revise it into a full-length play. I was very interested in including this play in my new text because it represents the first-hand account of the story because it was Inge’s first attempt at writing the *Picnic* story. As previously discussed, when historians write history, they must first rely on first-hand accounts to create a written account of the event. Inge relied on *Front Porch* to develop *Picnic*. The play is described as a series of monologues by the five characters, almost like an eyewitness testimony (Inge Center 2). The play is not in print; however, I was able to find a copy of the play from the William Inge Center. I had originally intended to insert some of these monologues into my new text because they could highlight different motivations for some of the characters. These monologues would provide a contrast to the character’s motivations in *Picnic* in order to showcase how Inge had altered his characters over time. It was interesting to see which of the three versions were most similar.

However, the play I received was not the play I expected. The play was still called *Front Porch* but it was not the monologue version but a draft Inge used in converting the play into *Picnic*. It was being revised into *Picnic* and included Inge’s notes on the draft. It appeared to be dated around April or May of 1951, several years after he wrote the original but two years before *Picnic* would premiere. Although this was not what I had planned on incorporating, it provided some valuable material because it showcased Inge’s writing process and elements he had intended for *Picnic* before he was influenced by a director and the rehearsal process. The script also provided new insight into the characters and relationships, which eventually disappeared in
Picnic; these disappearances will be discussed shortly. The play also had several additional characters, including the character of Hal. The script is fairly close to the structure of Picnic but with some major stylistic and plot differences, including locations and the portrayal of Madge and Hal’s relationship. By analyzing the script with the four cruxes, I was able to compare Front Porch to the other scripts in order to understand how to incorporate Front Porch into my new text. Interestingly, during his rewriting process Inge envisioned several new titles for his new play. There are two that are listed, A Pretty Girl and Landscape with Figures; Picnic is not even mentioned as a possibility. I struggled with a similar problem trying to develop a title for the new work that would best capture the spirit of the piece. I liked his title, Landscape With Figures, because it tied into the feeling of isolation of Edward Hopper’s paintings. I used Edward Hopper’s images as an inspirational source to influence the design of the piece when I staged the production. Hopper’s images captured the feeling of isolation and desire for change, which are also important themes in Inge’s work.

This version of Front Porch suggests that Inge was not really concerned about the physical production because the script has double the characters and more sets than either Picnic or Summer Brave would have. Inge added additional teachers and teenagers to the script to make it feel more populated; however, over time the amount of characters was reduced either to streamline the story or for production purposes. A few of the characters included in Front Porch are important to note. One character is Bonnie Edwards, who is described as a careless soul. Bonnie appears throughout the show walking along the street in front of Flo’s and Mrs. Potts’ houses. She does not have any dialogue. I am curious if at any point she did have any dialogue or
if she had a larger role in the play and it was simply cut down over time. There are several moments of haunting stage directions for Bonnie, but the most haunting is at the end of the show:

Now comes the sound of Bonnie Edwards’ mocking laughter, just a little lewd and cynical. She is coming back from the station with another friend, who is telling her stories beneath the intimacy of her parasol. Her laughter has a slightly shocking effect on Flo and Mrs. Potts who watch Bonnie with more curiosity than real disapproval. Bonnie and her friend stroll easily by and off. (*Front Porch* III-16)

The appearance of Bonnie in *Front Porch* sparks some questions about whether she should be included in a new dramatic text as well. To determine this, I referred to my four cruxes outlined above. The first is to explore why the author wrote the character of Bonnie. In *Front Porch*, Madge does not run off with Hal. Bonnie could be interpreted as Madge’s demise, becoming the local whore, especially the way Madge is depicted in this script. This is why Bonnie’s laughter at the end becomes haunting in a way; she marks the end of innocence which Madge has just experienced after she spent the night with Hal. The question to be asked is why Inge did not include Bonnie in future versions? One reason could be the societal constraints of the 1950s. Making Madge and Hal’s affair more apparent, as in *Front Porch*, would not have been appropriate in the 1950s for a commercial audience because of the affair’s sexual nature. It also could have been due to physical constraints of production; perhaps it did not make sense to have a character only appear briefly at the beginning and end of each act.

The convention that Bonnie Edwards introduced in *Front Porch* is important because it offers the possibility of the future and suggests the end of innocence, which I believe is at the heart of each of the three plays. I liked the idea of her drifting through the show and representing what could happen to Madge, and I incorporated a very similar idea into my new text. The singer in my text represents Madge later in life, looking back at her fateful choice of either leaving with
Hal or staying at home. While Bonnie Edward’s fleeting presence on stage alludes to Madge’s potential downfall, the singer’s life is more ambiguous about whether she left with Hal or stayed at home. The audience expects Madge to run away with Hal; however, in two of the three scripts, Inge does not have Madge leave with Hal. The second crux points to the need to include a more ambiguous ending, because even though Picnic is more popular, it does not provide the ending the author intended. This ambiguous ending allows both the audience and author’s preferences to be fulfilled. I wanted the audience to create its own interpretation of the story of Picnic just as Postlewait describes in the reader/audience interpretation crux that readers brings their own interpretation to history. Audience members could determine which ending they felt is the most truthful.

Another character who appears in Front Porch but not in Picnic is Beano. He later appeared in Summer Brave. Beano is an additional school-aged boy who comes to taunt and flirt with Madge. While Inge must have thought he was important to introduce in two of the three versions, he does not add much to the story. He was not necessary because the central part of the all three scripts is Madge’s relationship with Hal. I wanted to dedicate more time to that storyline in my text and highlight Madge’s sense of longing for change and her sense of isolation. However, before immediately cutting Beano, I applied my cruxes of historiography to see if he was a necessary addition. While he is in the original version, he does not add any additional information to the plot. The audience members who are only familiar with Picnic will only be expecting one newspaper boy and not two, so he becomes unnecessary. Also, if the audience knows Picnic, Madge, her sister Millie and Flo discuss how the boys in town treat Madge, the
audience can hear that rather than see it physicalized on stage. In my new text I deleted these scenes with Beano and the other paperboys.

Another significant change in *Front Porch* is that there are several locations. In this version, Inge sets scenes in locations other than simply the shared backyard of Flo and Mrs. Potts. He adds a scene in the pool that introduces the audience to Hal there rather than when he first meets Madge. While it does open up the story, these multiple locations muddle the central focus of the plot too much by showing the audience unnecessary secondary locations and introducing a multitude of characters. While Inge may have initially wanted to truly expand his focus from his original series of monologues, he may have later realized he needed to streamline the story.

While I appreciate the simplified plot in *Picnic*, which focuses on Madge and Hal, there were a couple of scenes from *Front Porch* that could be incorporated into my new dramatic text, because they enhanced Madge as a character and offered additional possibilities for the audience to consider what happened between Hal and Madge. However through the use of the four cruxes, some of these scenes I thought I needed did not make it into the final script. To determine which scenes to include, I once again used the lens of historiography outlined above. One of the first scenes was at the beginning of Act One that depicts Madge, Millie, and Flo’s reaction to the train coming through town. This is a scene that appears in all three scripts; however, Madge’s response to the train varies slightly from script to script. In order to provide a fuller image of the character of Madge, it could be useful to intercut a scene from *Picnic* and a scene from *Summer Brave* together to show the two different reactions to the train. However, Madge’s response in *Summer Brave* does not really mention the train; instead, it talks about going off to college. The
dialogue in the scene from *Front Porch* mentioned the train like the dialogue in *Picnic*, so I decided to intercut those together. In the *Picnic* scene, Madge describes the way the train makes her feel and that she hopes someone will get off the train and come spot her in the dime store. In *Front Porch*, she has a practical rather than emotional view of the train, discussing how it can take her away from town to where she could get a job. While the job she mentions is modeling, a job in which she is still viewed as a commodity, it does demonstrate more empowerment because Madge is looking to change her fate, rather than hoping for a miracle to walk into town. Madge’s degrees of empowerment vary from script to script. She is the most empowered in *Summer Brave*, which can stem from the fact that this version was written in a later time period during which women gained more freedom and independence. The value system crux is important here because the place of women in society has changed from when these scripts were written to current times. When creating a new text it is important to try and understand what the playwright was trying to showcase in his play but was not able to because of the era it was written. It then becomes our responsibility to highlight how society has advanced and provide a text that is more relevant to the current time period and allows the playwright the opportunity to showcase their full story.

The two scenes provide a nice juxtaposition to each other, presenting two different sides of Madge. I kept the scene within its original place in *Picnic*, which is only a couple of pages in, so it also helped to establish the idea of two Madges. Each Madge represents a different side of her personality; one will end up leaving with Hal while the other one stays behind. In my text, the two Madges depict multiple perspectives; one in the past and one in the present; one practical and one emotional. My specific ideas about how to use the two Madges evolved during my
writing process, which will be discussed later; however, this early scene allows the reader to get a taste of having both Madges speaking at the same time. Hopefully this clues the reader/audience to the fact that they are both the same person.

Another scene from *Front Porch* I included was one between Millie and Alan in the middle of Act Three. In all the versions of the scripts, Millie has a strong crush on Alan. She tried to verbalize this attraction but she is never quite successful in romance. This scene provides a glimpse of Millie’s attempt to gain Alan’s affection. It is also the only scene in all three versions in which they were entirely alone. The scene is placed after scenes with the other main romantic couples and provided a nice opportunity to better showcase Millie’s desires. In Act Three, Scene 1 of *Picnic* and *Summer Brave*, the main couples, Madge and Hal and Rosemary and Howard, are coming home from their romantic evenings and discussing the future while the scene with Millie and Alan is missing. By applying the initial motivations crux I was able to discover that Inge wrote the Millie and Alan relationship as a contrast to Alan’s relationship to Madge, and this scene presents that contrast well. I decided to place this brief scene after Rosemary and Howard’s scene but before Madge and Hal return home. It provided a nice comedic break in the scene and allowed the audience to see more of Alan and Millie’s relationship, which Inge had already slightly alluded to in *Picnic*. It was an important part of *Front Porch* because the scene attempts to fulfill Inge’s desire for the script because he hints at elements of Millie’s affection towards Alan in the other two scripts, less overtly. I felt I needed to include this more overt scene in my new text.

There was a brief scene in Act One of *Front Porch* in which Flo and Mrs. Potts are discussing Rosemary’s attitude towards men. In all three versions of the scripts, Rosemary tries
to put on a façade for all the ladies that she does not need the support of a man to survive, but we realize this is not true in Act Three, Scene 1 of all the scripts as she desperately begs Howard to marry her. In this scene in Act One, Flo and Mrs. Potts analyze Rosemary’s behavior and discuss the fact that “talk is cheap” to describe Rosemary’s lack of desire to be married. While the scene does not add much new information, it would become clear to the audience that Rosemary was putting up a façade. I decided to include the scene because of Flo’s line that “talk is cheap.” It was an appropriate statement about women’s public versus private personae that Inge was trying to explore in his script. All the women reveal private details to family but not to each other. They remain strong toward each other even if they are in desperate need of help or comfort. The women are also privately longing for something but publicly appear to be satisfied; Rosemary longs to be married but says she is independent; Flo acts independent but she is truly heartbroken. All the women are struggling for something new and different but they all try to protect themselves.

The final scene from *Front Porch* I considered including, I debated heavily about whether or not to include. Inge wrote a scene at the end of Act Two which depicts Madge and Hal away from the picnic discussing their physical attraction to one another. The scene clarifies several points about Madge and Hal’s relationship, which is a little bit unclear in the other two scripts. It helps to clarify that they did sleep together and that Hal initiated their intimacy. In fact, the way this scene is written it makes it appear as if Hal rapes Madge. At the beginning of the scene, Hal is described as “forcing a kiss” (*Front Porch* 2-43) on Madge before he claims, “when I see a pretty girl, she’s gotta be mine.” Throughout the scene, he constantly wants emotional fulfillment from Madge by asking her over and over to tell him that she loves him. He claims he
needs a pretty girl to continue living and survive. He continues to beg for her love, which she
ever tells him she does. He then moves to physical fulfillment telling Madge:

HAL: I don’t ask for the things I gotta have. I take ‘em.
MADGE: I…I…
HAL: The worst is going to happen, Baby.
MADGE: (starting away) I have to go home.
HAL: (drawing her back) Relax…you might as well.
MADGE: It’s late.
HAL: You got work to do.
MADGE: I have to go home.
HAL: You gotta console a guy…for ever being born.
MADGE: I’m scared.
HAL: (forcing her to the ground, hovering over her, speaking with hot and urgent need)
Tell me you love me, Baby. Tell me you love me. God damn it, tell me you love me.
(Front Porch 2-45)

The final stage directions of the scene indicates that the train whistle then sounds, “it cuts loose
with one shrill screech of its whistle like a cry of sudden pain” (Front Porch 2-45). This scene
puts an entirely different context on Hal and Madge’s relationship as well as Hal’s insecurities.
The physical relationship between Hal and Madge is a bit ambiguous in the other versions. The
difference between the scripts when it comes to this scene can be analyzed through the third
crux. Picnic and Summer Brave were presented to a commercial audience in the 1950s. The
moral code allowed at the time would not have permitted Inge to present the scene he had written
in Front Porch, even if Inge intended for Hal to rape Madge in Picnic and Summer Brave. He
could not let that be seen by the audience. When creating a new text for the current time period,
alluding to a rape would not be so startling to an audience because audiences are familiar with
the topic as well as its representation of rape in contemporary plays. However, did Inge truly
intend to have Hal rape Madge? This was a question I debated while creating my new text. There
were moments in Picnic and Summer Brave that could be interpreted as a reaction to a rape, but
it was not clear. I considered having one of the two Madges raped so that it only affected one ending, but could it then be rationalized that she made a choice to leave or stay because she was raped and that would, in turn hurt, the other ending? I also considered adding the scene at the very end of my text as another option for the reader to consider of what actually happened. In the end, I decided not to add the scene because this scene would be so radically different than Picnic that audiences would not be prepared for it; it would be too startling and overshadow the other ending possibilities. Also, why did Inge remove the scene? Maybe he removed this scene because it overshadowed the rest of Madge and Hal’s relationship depicted in the show. Maybe he changed his mind about the nature of their relationship. There was really no way to know, so I did not want to incorporate such a controversial topic into my new text.

These few scenes from Front Porch were used to add more depth to characters and to help justify the addition of an additional character in my new text. I was able to select the scenes which could provide the complete version of the Picnic story while satisfying Inge and the audience. While Front Porch only provided additional material, the next text to be discussed, Picnic, provided the basis for my new text.
I decided to use *Picnic* as the foundation for my new text for a variety of different reasons. I used it as the basis for my text because of the three plays; it was the most well-known to audiences. I used my second crux from historiography to investigate why *Picnic* was the script that was still in publication and popular with audiences. The reason *Picnic* is still known today might be because it had a very successful run on Broadway and was subsequently made into a movie, neither of which happened for either *Front Porch* or *Summer Brave*. It was important to use *Picnic* as the basis because it had received the most critical analysis compared to the other versions I am incorporating in my new text. It was important not only to determine how Inge felt about his plays but also how critics perceived his work. For *Front Porch*, I could not find much critical review of the play; however, for *Picnic* and *Summer Brave* I did find more critical analysis. Since I was using *Picnic* as the basis, this chapter will be a little different in that I will be discussing which elements of the script were unique to *Picnic* in addition to examining which elements I could cut from the script in order to include the additional material from *Front Porch* and *Summer Brave*.

Before discussing the specifics of the text, it is important to understand how *Picnic* came to be and also ponder Inge’s original motivations and aims with transforming *Front Porch* into *Picnic*. These four cruxes of historiography will allow me to determine which elements of the script can be altered. *Picnic* was Inge’s second Broadway production. While Inge had been successful with his first production, he still relied heavily on his director, Joshua Logan, for guidance on the script. Inge had originally transformed *Front Porch* into a version that was similar to *Summer Brave* with a realistic, depressing ending rather than the romantic ending seen
in Picnic; “the draft of Picnic, Inge preferred, for example, Summer Brave, with its downbeat final act, was unquestionably improved when Inge, thanks to Joshua Logan’s insistence, restored to the formulaic ending required of generic romance” (Johnson 41). While critics and audiences felt that the Picnic ending, where Madge runs off with Hal, was more satisfying, it may not have been exactly what Inge wanted. He was nervous about the success of the script and in the heat of rehearsals may have been willing to rewrite his script even if those rewrites did not satisfy his original intentions for the script. The characters he wrote about in Picnic were people he had watched as a child; he knew them better than a Broadway audience and knew what would be a more realistic ending. But to be a successful production, the need to satisfy the audience and provide them with something they were used to seeing may have overshadowed his original goal for the piece. Inge later reflected on why he allowed himself to alter his original ending; “we had our ups and downs with [Picnic], which I attribute mainly to my second-play nervousness and indecision. An unstable author, who isn’t sure what he wants, is a great liability to a director; so if Picnic did not come off entirely to please me, it was my own fault. Josh only sensed my indecision and tried to compensate for it” (Voss 26). While he does not blame Logan for the changes in the text, he does admit that he was not fully satisfied with the final product, which eventually inspired him to rewrite Picnic once again and restore it to a version similar to the one he had originally envisioned.

Now that the context for the script’s creation has been established, we can proceed to the script, one of the very first scenes in the script is one between Millie, Bomber (the paper boy), and Madge. It is an exposition scene discussing Madge’s beauty and how all the teenage boys in town are in love with her. I decided to eliminate this scene because the dialogue paints the
female characters in a poor light. It made the women into objects of men’s desire and also the
*Picnic* ending makes Madge very dependent on men. One of my goals with my text was to make
the piece a bit more feminist by presenting stronger, more independent female characters, which
is more like the independent women Inge included in *Front Porch* and *Summer Brave*. Even
though Inge was not a feminist, he was progressive in his portrayal of gender; as Jeff Johnson
discusses in *William Inge and the Subversion of Gender*, Inge frequently subverted the traditional
views and stereotypes of male and female behaviors in his plays. Some of his female characters
are fairly strong women, and this initial scene undercut that idea and it starts the show in a very
negative light showcasing Madge as dependent on men and just a commodity to be coveted by
men. He may have included the scene in order to show that he could conform to gender
conventions, which was necessary to protect himself in the 1950s. However, today’s audience is
more accepting and interested in seeing gender bending on stage. The reason I also cut this scene
was that I decided to eliminate the character of Bomber. He was not really necessary and only
provided exposition that was already in the script elsewhere. Also, in the 1950s, it was expected
to have a very large cast of characters in a play, which was why he might have been included,
but again the cultural conventions of playwriting have changed and smaller casts are now
preferred. Furthermore, I wanted to scale down the number of characters in the script because I
was also adding two new characters to my text.

Similarly, I also decided to eliminate Rosemary’s two school teacher friends, Irma and
Christine. I eliminated them for the same reasons I eliminated Bomber. They did not add
anything to the plot; they acted more like a Greek chorus to Rosemary’s character. It would be
more interesting to explore the dynamic between Flo, Mrs. Potts and Rosemary rather than
between Rosemary and the teachers. The teachers were representing idealized, domestic women with no strong opinions about society and relegated into very female, domestic jobs. Although Rosemary is also a teacher, she has a desire to find fulfillment either personally or professionally. She does not seem satisfied with her current position, something all the primary female characters desire as well. In total, I ended up eliminating three characters from *Picnic*, which allowed me to introduce my two new characters and also focus more on the primary storyline of Madge and Hal and offer the possible different outcomes Inge had created.

Another scene I debated about cutting was in Act One between Hal and Alan. It is their very lengthy reunion scene in which they discuss their history, and it provides the audience additional backstory about Hal. I debated cutting it because the scene was a very lengthy distraction from the primary storyline; also in my text I combined Act One and Act Two into one act so I was trying to find ways to shorten the act. However, I realized the scene gave the audience some perspective on Hal’s character and gave him some humanity early in the script. I also looked at some critical analysis of *Picnic*, which discussed how Inge’s own conflicted sexuality caused the gender bending throughout the script. His sexuality particularly influenced Hal and Alan’s relationship because “the Hal-Alan-Madge triangle in *Picnic*, …[the reader typically] visualizes the heterosexual coupling of the boy and girl with the third boy being the odd man out, when in fact a more interesting and in some cases more plausible dramatic truth explores the male-bonding” (Johnson 34). After discovering this analysis, it was important to keep this scene because it was strongly influenced by Inge’s own personality and highlighted a possible goal of his in the text, but one that could not be expressed overtly. I decided to expand Hal’s story even more by adding a pantomime set to the song “Summertime” at the beginning
that showcases all the characters, including a section depicting the story he tells Alan about being robbed by two women on the road. While I had originally thought I would focus on Madge throughout my text, I realized that Hal was an important part of Madge and I needed to provide him more depth and perspective based on what I had read in the three scripts. I was interested in exploring the suggested homosexual relationship but none of the scripts provided text to elaborate this relationship. I decided to leave the text ambiguous and explore this relationship in the staging of the piece and the audience’s possible interpretation. By adding the pantomime, it makes the audience begin to question whether Hal made up these stories or are they true. This idea prepares the audience for making a decision about which of the two endings is reality and which one is Madge’s imagination.

In Act Two, I did not cut much except for a story Madge tells Hal, and I changed some of Rosemary’s drunken outburst during the dance scene which leads to her ripping Hal’s shirt because he will not dance with her. She tries to dance with Hal because of his youth and good looks. After she rips his shirt, she then ridicules him for being white trash and claims he should be ashamed for flirting with Madge. While the scene was very powerful as written, it was interesting to compare the same scene to *Summer Brave*. Rosemary seemed to have become more vocal and sexual with Hal in *Summer Brave*. I found this to be more compelling and it also made Rosemary a stronger, more multifaceted character. Inge has Rosemary now tell the story Madge tells Hal after the shirt ripping in order to make Rosemary more sexual in *Summer Brave*. Rosemary uses it as a flirting technique while Madge uses the story to comfort Hal in *Picnic*:

Don’t feel bad. Women like Miss Sydney make me disgusted for the whole female sex. Last year she and some of the other teachers made such a fuss about a statue in the library. It was a gladiator and all he had on was a shield on his arm. Those teachers kept hollering about that statue, they said it was an insult to them every time they walked into
the library. Finally, they made the principal – I don’t know how to say it, but one of the janitors got busy with a chisel and then they weren’t insulted any more (Picnic 54)

Madge’s attack on Rosemary undermined Rosemary’s strength as a woman, which I do not think was Inge’s intention because of how independent he tried to craft her, but the audience interpretation crux reveals that the audience would probably interpret it that way. In Summer Brave, Rosemary uses the story as a flirting tactic, which I found to be a more interesting way to use the story rather than as a comforting tool, so I decided to eliminate Madge saying it and have Rosemary interject it into her drunken flirtation as she does in Summer Brave. Her ridicule of Hal after she rips his shirt was also longer in Summer Brave because she insults him even more, which I found more effective in motivating the plot and driving Madge towards Hal rather than her quick explosion in Picnic.

The second scene in the third act of Picnic and Summer Brave is where the two scripts start to truly diverge from one another. Picnic presents the formulaic, happy ending while Summer Brave presents a more depressing ending. This was the most difficult part of creating a new text, trying to decide what to do with the two endings and which ending was the best ending for both the audience and Inge. How could I satisfy both? I debated about cutting Picnic’s ending entirely and just showing the Summer Brave ending. However, if I did that the new text would have simply become a longer version of Summer Brave, which was not my intention. I decided I needed to take into account several of my historiography cruxes by asking three questions: what was Inge’s goal with the ending in Picnic, why has Picnic survived, and how will an audience interpret the script? After analyzing Picnic’s ending, I realized there was a need to include that ending based on the historiography cruxes. Even if Inge did not necessarily agree with the happy ending, he did write that ending, not someone else, so there had to be some truth to it. There was
merit to presenting the ending because it followed the truth of his characters as written in *Picnic*. The ending also could be viewed as a critique of the happy romantic ending; throughout the script, Inge breaks the gender roles, why would he not comment on the traditional happy ending of boy and girl uniting?

Because of the survival of the original documents crux, even if I presented Inge’s preferred ending, the audience was still going to have certain expectation about the ending. This was the main problem audiences had with *Summer Brave* when it premiered on Broadway. They expected the uplifting ending they saw in *Picnic* and were instead disappointed by the realistic ending. I wanted to make sure the audience was not going to be disappointed but also got to experience the story as Inge may have intended for it to end.

Finally, because of the value system crux, I knew the audience would bring their own interpretation to the script and I wanted to capitalize on that. By presenting both endings it would force the audience to fully analyze both endings, and determine which ending actually happened. I wanted to keep it as ambiguous as possible so it would be totally up to the audience to determine which ending Madge actually experienced. I will discuss in detail the order of the endings in Chapter Six. While I heavily debated about the ending in *Picnic*, I ended up leaving it mostly unchanged even though it made the script longer. The only change I made to the final scene was that I eliminated or changed who said some of the lines because I had eliminated the characters of Bomber and teachers. In hindsight, juxtaposing the two complete endings side-by-side allows the audience to be more actively engaged in the material, it makes an older piece fresh again, and hopefully it provides the audience with something to ponder after the show was over.
Since *Picnic* is the basis of my new text, not too much was changed about the text. The major changes included the elimination of characters, some changes in the climax in Act Two and a debate about what to do with the ending of the script. My four cruxes of historiography help to support using *Picnic* as the basis for the new dramatic text even though Inge did have some problems with the final product. Inge tried to fix those faults in his next version; however, for the most part, the storyline remained very similar to *Picnic*. The next chapter will highlight the changes to *Summer Brave* and how including those differences in the new dramatic text fulfills what might have been Inge’s original intention with *Picnic*. 
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMER BRAVE

_Summer Brave_ follows the same basic dramatic structure of _Picnic_ with one major difference, the ending. Inge approached _Summer Brave_ as a way to correct the faults he found with _Picnic_, particularly the ending. By fixing these faults he also added additional depth to some of his characters, adjusted the placement of critical scenes within Act One and Act Two and completely altered the ending course of the story, which are all important elements to consider when creating a new text. Should these alterations be included? If so, where? As previously discussed, I initially combined _Picnic_ and _Summer Brave_ before adding _Front Porch_, because _Picnic_ and _Summer Brave_ were closely aligned, so a lot of the new material in my dramatic text came from _Summer Brave_. Some of the new material only exists in _Summer Brave_, which will be discussed in this chapter. Some scenes were in both _Summer Brave_ and _Picnic_, but I preferred the placement or wording of _Summer Brave_. I will discuss how I handled these duplicate scenes in the next chapter when I discuss my new dramatic text.

One of the first unique scenes is early in Act One when Madge discusses that she would like to have a career. This scene falls around the same time as a scene in _Picnic_ where Madge discusses how the train makes her feel and that she hopes someone will walk into the Dime Store and change her life. While _Picnic_ has a very optimist perspective, _Summer Brave_ allows Madge to be a bit more practical and independent woman. In _Picnic_, she drifts through life, which contrasts _Summer Brave_ where she tries to take control of the situation. I wanted to incorporate this scene because it provided a stronger independent portrait of Madge, which was one of my goals with my new text. Initially I juxtaposed it with the train scene in _Picnic_; however, the dialogue in the two scripts was not compatible. It was not the best juxtaposition of the scripts to
use when first introducing the idea of two Madges and having them both talk simultaneously. Instead, I intercut the train sequence from *Picnic* and *Front Porch*. I then included the career scene right after the dialogue about the train. It helped to provide two unique perspectives of Madge while also trying to portray Madge as a stronger woman.

The next unique scene is one between Madge and Flo discussing whether Flo truly loved Madge’s father. Throughout *Picnic*, there is possible subtext that Hal is very much like Flo’s husband who either left Flo or whom Flo did not follow. The closing lines of *Picnic* include an exchange between Mrs. Potts and Flo explaining this subtext:

    FLO: Helen! Helen! Could I stop her?
    MRS. POTTS: Could anyone have stopped you?
    FLO: There are so many things I wanted to tell her!
    MRS. POTTS: Let her learn them for herself, Flo. (*Picnic* 74)

While it is clear in this exchange that there is some important history between Flo and her husband or former boyfriend, it is not discussed at length in *Picnic*. The audience does not know specifically what happened between them. In *Summer Brave*, however, Inge dedicates a scene early in the show to discussing Flo’s feelings about men in more detail:

    MADGE: Mom, did you love Dad?
    FLO: What a question!
    MADGE: I’m serious.
    FLO: Well…
    MADGE: Did you?
    FLO: Well, of course I did!
    MADGE: I don’t see why it’s so hard to admit it.
    FLO: It can be embarrassing to love a man.
    MADGE: I don’t see why.
    FLO: ‘Cause a man is stronger…in most ways…and the woman is weak to begin with…and if she’s in love with him, she’s all the weaker. You have to fight for things in this life and…sometimes it’s a disadvantage to be in love. (*Summer Brave* 16)
This scene helps to provide more depth to Flo’s character and explains why she is so protective of Madge. Inge still does not tell the audience specifically what happened with Flo, which is a good strategy because it allows the audience to bring their own interpretation to Flo’s history, just like the fourth historiography crux states that readers’ bring their own interpretation to history. However, this scene does provide more insight into Flo’s character and pieces of her backstory. Her sentiments could have been part of her character in all three scripts but are only expressed in *Summer Brave*. For that reason it was important to include this scene because it provides a fuller portrait of Flo and clarifies elements in the two previous scripts about her failed relationship.

At the end of Act One, Mrs. Potts makes a revelation about Hal and Alan. She wishes they could be more like each other; creating the ideal man:

MRS. POTTS: I was just thinking. Wouldn’t it be nice if Alan were more like the young man, and the young man were more like Alan?
FLO: A woman can’t expect a man to be everything.
MRS. POTTS: No. Of course not. (*Summer Brave* 29)

This scene states an idea that the ideal man would probably be a combination of Hal and Alan. Madge wants Alan to be adventurous like Hal and Flo wants Hal to be more reserved like Alan. While the text is not overly necessary to the script, because the audience would eventually be able to come to this conclusion on their own, Flo’s line is the most important line to consider. Her line could be interpreted as Inge’s feelings toward the formulaic romance ending he was forced to include in *Picnic*. Inge recognizes that Madge running off with Hal may have been less than realistic, so he may have used Mrs. Potts’s line about blending Hal and Alan into the ideal man as a commentary for the Broadway audience’s desire for a formulaic, predictable ending. I
was not sure the audience would pick up the double meaning of the line, but at least it provides the opportunity to comment on relationships and love.

Act Two of *Summer Brave* opens with some of the same scenes that are in Act One of *Picnic*; however, there is a unique scene between Millie and Hal. Millie is sketching a picture of Hal, but while she is sketching he is talking about his life plans. Hal discusses with Millie that “you know, I wish I had more time to read. That’s what I’m gonna do when I settle down. I’m gonna read all the better books, and listen to all the better music, like symphonies. A man owes it to himself” (*Summer Brave* 43). Inge makes a point of making Hal seem like he has a life plan and is not creating the stories he is telling. On the other hand, in *Picnic* Hal comes across as a storyteller, which I am not sure if that was Inge’s intention or not. It is important to apply the four cruxes to analyze how Hal is presented in all three scripts. In *Front Porch*, the first time Inge introduces Hal, he calls him our “hero.” Inge may have wanted Hal to be the main character, but in the process of rewriting the script into *Picnic*, Madge ended up becoming the primary character. In *Summer Brave*, Madge is still the primary character, but because of the way Hal is crafted, Hal experiences a more tragic journey throughout the play and ends with a tragic ending when Madge refuses to leave with him.

Another difference is at the end of Act Two in *Picnic*, where there is a romantic scene between only Hal and Madge, whereas in *Summer Brave* there is a lengthy scene between Alan and Hal. In the lengthy scene, Alan reprimands Hal for his drinking and getting into the argument with Rosemary. Hal feels personally attacked that Alan does not see him as anything more than a bum:

HAL: You don’t understand, miss. Al don’t think I’m good enough to ‘ssociate with you fine people.
ALAN: Hal, I never said that.
HAL: But you thought it, Al. You thought maybe if a solid citizen like you took a kindly interest in a bum like me, you could chalk one up for charity. *(Summer Brave 55)*

This scene makes the audience sympathize with Hal more. Throughout *Summer Brave* it seems like Hal is misunderstood and trying to figure out how to achieve his life plan, a very different Hal from the confident, ladies’ man seen in *Picnic*. As the initial motivations crux states it is important to understand that *Summer Brave* was written later in Inge’s career so he was able to express what he wanted to write and did not have to follow the theatrical conventions. Also Hal and Madge’s relationship may have changed in *Summer Brave* because Inge was starting to head into depression himself, which may have affected his personal views on romance.

It is interesting to note that while Inge was trying to make Hal more sympathetic, he decided to cut the romantic scene between Hal and Madge at the end of Act Two. Instead, the tone of Hal’s advances toward Madge seems closely aligned with Hal and Madge’s relationship in *Front Porch*. Again, this change in dynamics probably stemmed from Inge’s own changing views on relationships; he turns Madge and Hal’s relationship into something simply based on the physical rather than emotional attraction:

MADGE: You know what? I think you have an inferiority complex.
HAL: Quiet, doll.
MADGE: No one ever called me “doll” before.
HAL: Yah?
MADGE: Honest!
HAL: Well…there’s a first time for everything.
MADGE: We better go.
HAL: Come here, doll!
MADGE: We’ve got the basket with the fried chicken.
HAL: *(appraising her from head to toe)* Haven’t we just!
MADGE: They’ll be waiting.
HAL: Look, baby. I got a hot news flash.
MADGE: What?
HAL: (suddenly and impulsively, he takes her in his arms and kisses her devouringly)
We’re not goin’ to no God damn picnic. (Summer Brave 56)

I liked the tone at the beginning of the scene where he calls her a doll and she finds that attractive, but the ending of the scene it has the possible rape quality that Inge included in Front Porch. Inge included this similar tone in his first play, and in Summer Brave is this what he truly intended for Hal and Madge’s relationship to be like? Unfortunately, I was unable to find any research or notes from Inge discussing what his intention behind Hal and Madge’s relationship was. The lack of data might have stemmed from the time period in which these pieces were written. I decided not to include the ending of this scene for the same reasons I decided not to incorporate the rape scene in Front Porch, it would overshadow the rest of the piece and the audience would interpret that as the reason why Madge either left with Hal or stayed behind. I did not want that to directly influence the audience; I wanted them to listen to Inge’s text and decide for themselves what actually happened. This example of the changing tone of Madge and Hal’s relationship highlights the need to apply the historiography cruxes to analyze multiple scripts. These cruxes will allowed me to truly understand what version is most effective in order to incorporate it into a new comprehensive text, which is the result of a consensus of the three scripts. If one just read and analyzed Picnic, the possibility of Hal raping Madge may not even exist. But, within the context of two of the three scripts, this is a possibility, so one should then start to question the playwright’s true intentions and apply the four cruxes of historiography I have discussed. The cruxes allow one to attempt to understand the goal of each play; why ideas may have faded from subsequent drafts, did it disappear because of social conventions or audience perceptions. After applying these four cruxes, I was able to determine that it was not appropriate to include the rape aspect in the new dramatic text I created.
As discussed in the previous chapter, the endings of *Picnic* and *Summer Brave* are different so it is important to discuss what aspects of the *Summer Brave* ending motivated me to include that entire ending in my new text. The *Summer Brave* ending begins with a scene between several teenage boys in town all discussing what happened last night with Madge and how she is easy. This scene replaced the ending of Act Three, Scene One of *Picnic*, where Hal brings Madge back home. I decided not to include this scene because I had eliminated those characters from the script, and I did not want to paint Madge in a negative light. Also it would be interesting to see Madge and Hal discussing what happened rather than the teenage boys. Instead, I began the new ending with Flo scolding Madge and trying to figure out what happened between Madge and Hal. Madge reveals what happens and Flo advises her that:

FLO: There’s true love in this life…and there’s something else, excitement and heart throbs and thrills. All of them vanish after a few years, maybe after a few days. Then you hate yourself for having been such a fool, to let yourself be tricked, to have given up your entire life and all the years that lie ahead…because one night…something happened that made the blood trickle up your spine…that made your heart beat like a gong inside a cavern…that made you feel all of a sudden…like you’d found the whole reason for being born.
MADGE: He…he needs me.
FLO: Yes, he needs you. He needs you to stay home and fry potatoes and wash his underwear while he’s at the pool hall. He needs you to forgive him when he spends all his wages on booze. He needs you to lie to when other women call the house and want to know where he is.
MADGE: Don’t…don’t say things like that.
FLO: Now listen to me, girl, and listen close. Alan will be here in a minute.
MADGE: I don’t want to hurt Alan’s feelings. Honest, I don’t.
FLO: You’ve already hurt his feelings but that can’t be helped right now. The point is, he loves you, and he’s going to forget about this, maybe tomorrow, maybe today. Make up some story. He’ll believe you because he wants to believe you, and thank you for sparing him the truth.
MADGE: I couldn’t lie to Alan.
FLO: Then keep your mouth shut, and let me do the talking. (*Summer Brave* 63)
This ending creates a higher level of tension than *Picnic*. It immediately puts Madge on the defensive and she has to decide whether she wants to leave or stay. Inge also uses this as another opportunity for Flo to reveal more about how she feels about love. The audience can begin to understand fully the similarity between Flo’s and Madge’s situations. Also, Madge does not immediately give up the idea of being with Alan; it is an idea she wrestles with throughout the scene.

Alan arrives earlier in the ending of *Summer Brave* and he tries to forgive Madge for what has happened, blaming the entire situation on Hal. Hal then interrupts their discussion. Madge wants to talk to Hal, which Alan initially resists. However, Alan lets Madge talk with Hal and leaves them alone. Hal tries to convince Madge to leave with him but she has made up her mind not to:

MADGE: I’m going to marry Alan.
HAL: I heard you the first time.
MADGE: So, I just want you to know I haven’t any hard feelings, that I…I like you and everything but…I honestly think you better go.
HAL: (*beginning to show some of his soul’s despair*) Jesus, is this as far as it ever goes for me? Is it?
MADGE: Please…please go.
HAL: O.K. Whatever you say. (*He looks straight in her eyes*) Kiss me goodbye.
MADGE: I don’t think so.
HAL: Why? It’s only fair to kiss a guy goodbye.
MADGE: Just the same. I’m not going to.
HAL: Afraid?
MADGE: No. Of course I’m not afraid.
HAL: You’re lyin’.
MADGE: I am not.
HAL: Then kiss me to prove it. (*Summer Brave 65-66*)

This is a completely different dynamic than the relationship between Madge and Hal as seen in *Picnic*. Madge tries to keep a great deal of distance from Hal and does not want to fall back in love with him. She tries to not admit her feelings for him, even though she will confess them a
few pages later to Flo. Inge also paints Hal as a desperate character begging for Madge’s affection. The audience gets to see more of his humanity and hopefully empathizes with him more than they do in *Picnic*. It is very important to present this scene because it completely turns the table on Madge and Hal’s relationship. Inge publicly did not like the ending of *Picnic* where they ended up together. He thought the ending he crafted for *Summer Brave* was more appropriate to the story. In addition to what is written, I added some stage directions to the above scene. After Hal’s last line, I have him kiss Madge, which she lets happen for a few seconds before she slaps him on the face to break away from him. This provides a stronger moment of independence for Madge.

The ending of *Summer Brave* depicts Madge leaving for work and the teenage boys hollering after her. Flo and Mrs. Potts watch her from the porch. Flo tries to tell Madge not to get into the car with the boys, but as a final moment of independence Madge claims:

MADGE: I’m perfectly capable of making up my own mind, thank you.
FLO: Well, I like that!
MRS. POTTS: Yes, Flo. Let her make up her own mind. You don’t have to worry about Madge.
FLO: I just can’t help worrying.
MRS. POTTS: Madge is a woman now, Flo. She’s not a girl anymore. (*Summer Brave* 76)

Madge truly becomes her own woman through her experience with Hal. She does not run off with him and also finds her own sense of independence with Flo. Flo no longer says she has so much she wanted to tell Madge, like the ending of *Picnic*, because she has already confessed more about her own relationships throughout the play. I agree with Inge that although this is not the most romantic ending to the play, it is more realistic. However, it can be seen as uplifting because it demonstrates Madge’s rise to independence, which proves to be a very powerful
message. As discussed in the previous chapter, including just this ending would have satisfied Inge the most; however, I had to consider that *Picnic* is a well-known play and audiences would have an expectation for the ending. This is why it is important to consider all four of the historiography cruxes outlined, not just one, and develop a compromise that best satisfied all four.

*Summer Brave* provided a lot of unique and new material to be added to *Picnic* or to replace parts of *Picnic*. These additions helped to clarify some of Inge’s characters and his motivations. There are similar scenes in both scripts, which happened to be in very different places, which will be discussed in the next chapter outlining my new dramatic text, *William Inge’s Picnic*. 
CHAPTER SIX: CREATING WILLIAM INGE’S PICNIC

After analyzing the unique aspects of each of Inge’s three scripts, I began to develop my new text, which aimed to capture a fuller perspective of Inge’s possible intentions. My new text eliminated minor characters from his scripts, as discussed above, and focused on the main characters, particularly Madge. My new text includes three Madges – two who are experiencing the show in real time and one who is reflecting on the events seen in the show. I will discuss these multiple Madges shortly. Using Picnic as the basis, I began to layer in pieces of Summer Brave, then additional scenes from Front Porch, and finally songs not related to Inge’s texts. I will first discuss the sections that appeared in both Picnic and Summer Brave and how I handled them.

One of the first duplicate sections occurs in Act One in Summer Brave. Alan enters for the first time a lot earlier than in Picnic. His first scene is with Madge, where he discusses his return to college. Madge believes Alan will fall in love with a college girl instead of her, but he claims Madge is the perfect girl saying, “Madge you’re beautiful, I can’t believe you’re mine. Every morning I wake up and pinch myself to see if I’m dreaming” (Summer Brave 11). I liked the idea that Inge was hinting that Alan only sees Madge as the perfect object, not for the person she truly is. This idea was present in Picnic but not stated, as literally, so I wanted to make it more obvious in my new text. I wondered about introducing Alan so early in the play. I liked the structure of Picnic where he is introduced to the audience after we have already seen Hal and Madge together. I decided to incorporate it into a scene Alan and Madge have at the end of Act One where they are discussing their plans for the picnic. This scene helps to demonstrate the importance of using the four historiography cruxes not only to determine which scenes to
incorporate but also where those scenes would have the most dramatic effect within a script. The cruxes allowed me to determine the fullest synthesis of the story from the multiple scripts.

As previously discussed, very early in Act One, I incorporated the scene with the train that combines a scene from each of the three texts. This scene shows several different sides of Madge. It was important to include this scene early for a variety of different reasons. One of the reasons was that I wanted to introduce the audience to the idea that there were multiple sides to Madge since Inge’s depiction of her was a little bit different in each script. In order to explore and present these multiple sides of Madge, I introduced the idea of three Madges, two back in the 1950s and one ten years later looking back on her life. I had originally intended for each Madge to represent a different script, but I realized that would to be too confusing. The older Madge is not involved in the train scene; instead, the two younger Madges discuss different perspectives of the train; this scene helps to establish the convention for the audience of having two Madges on stage. The main Madge has a very optimistic view of life and ends up running off with Hal at the end (Picnic ending) while the secondary Madge has a more realistic view of life and ends up staying at home rather than leaving with Hal (Summer Brave ending). Hopefully, this scene establishes this dynamic, while I realize it may not be a hundred percent clear, I will address this issue in the next chapter describing my production.

Having dual Madges allows me a unique opportunity to incorporate scenes that appear in both Picnic and Summer Brave, but appear in very different locations. One of those scenes is between Flo and Madge discussing what it means to be pretty. In Picnic, this scene is in Act One, but in Summer Brave it is at the beginning of Act Two. I decided to include both versions of the scene, even though they were very similar in their respective locations. I included both
scenes because it was important to realize that Inge placed the scene in two different places for a reason. While I do not know the specific reason, presenting the scene in both places would allow the audience to understand the goal of this new text, which was to highlight how a writer’s intention can either be hidden or changed from revision to revision. Also, presenting the scene twice would allow the audience to truly understand the concept of two Madges in the show since the audience would realize they had already seen the scene once. However, my justification for including the scene twice is that maybe each Madge remembers that scene happening at different point in their life. Just like different versions of the same historical event, remembering the specific order of event could be slightly different from one person to another. In the initial scene from *Picnic*, I left the scene unchanged; only Madge and Flo have dialogue. Madge 2 watches the scene from the side. In the scene from *Summer Brave*, I included a scene about Madge watching over Millie at the picnic prior to the pretty scene. In both of these scenes, I rotated Madge’s dialogue back and forth between Madge and Madge 2. I really liked the structure of the scene from *Summer Brave* because it combined a lot of little moments from Act One of *Picnic* into one scene:

MADGE and MADGE 2: What good is it to be pretty?
FLO: What a question!
MADGE 2: I’m serious.
FLO: Well…*(apparently she is formulating her thoughts on the matter)*
MADGE 2: Is that all it means, just standing around for people to tell you how pretty you are?
FLO: Well…pretty things are rare in this life.
MADGE 2: But what good are they?
FLO: Pretty things like sunsets…and flowers…and rubies…and pretty girls, too…they’re billboards telling us life is good.
MADGE 2: Oh!
FLO: Living can be hard and folks get pretty discouraged, but when we see something beautiful it all seems worth while.
MADGE 2: That’s just fine but where do I come in?
FLO: What do you mean?
MADGE 2: Maybe I get tired of being looked at.
FLO: Madge!
MADGE and MADGE 2: Well, maybe I do!
FLO: Don’t talk so selfish.
MADGE 2: I don’t care if I am selfish. It’s no good just being pretty. It’s no good.
FLO: A woman’s life…whether she’s pretty or not…never means anything to her till it means something to someone else.
MADGE 2: I don’t get it.
FLO: Maybe you never will. Go get dressed.
MADGE: Here comes Rosemary and the other old maids.
FLO: Don’t talk so disrespectful. You may be an old maid yourself some day.
MADGE 2: I bet I’m not. (Summer Brave 33-34)

In this version of the scene, Flo struggles more to console Madge. Flo does not have all the answers until she reveals how she feels about relationships, even though her own was not successful. In staging the scene, I have Flo talking to Madge with Madge 2 off to the side saying the lines. This visual truly highlights the idea of two Madges and clarifies the idea that Madge is trying to remember her past but cannot remember when specific events/dialogue occurred.

Another element I decided to incorporate into my new text was making Rosemary and Howard’s relationship more heated. In Summer Brave, their dialogue has a little bit more spite to it, which could make their relationship a bit more interesting and makes Rosemary’s pleading at the end of the play for Howard to marry her even more heartbreaking; this scene strengthened the dramatic shift for Rosemary claiming independence throughout the show to then begging Howard to marry her. During Act Two, Howard and Rosemary’s heated relationship begins when they have some testy dialogue about Mrs. Potts’ cake; Rosemary tries to stop him from eating it and makes sure he uses a fork when he does eat it.

Rosemary and Howard’s cake scene is early in Act Two, and it highlights the more chaotic and heated dance sequence to follow in Summer Brave. While the dance sequence is the
climax in both *Picnic* and *Summer Brave*, the *Summer Brave* sequence exposes a drunker and more out of control Rosemary. Rosemary tries to flirt with Hal more and discusses how she used to be called the dancing fool because one night she danced so much she swooned. She continues to tell this story over and over again and she invades more and more of Hal’s personal space and tries to get him to dance with her. While the intentions behind the scene in both *Picnic* and *Summer Brave* are the same, in *Summer Brave* her rants provide a better arc to her eventual explosion at Hal after she tears his shirt.

In the middle of the dance sequence, Hal and Howard are left on stage and they watch Madge getting dressed. Madge is getting dressed by her second floor window and does not realize anyone is watching. While this scene occurs in both *Picnic* and *Summer Brave*, it is very objectifying towards Madge. She becomes a commodity, just to be looked at. While Inge did include this in both scripts, I wanted to find a way to soften it. This decision was informed by the value system crux I discussed earlier, because the codes and values for the way women are presented on stage have changed since the 1950s. I also wanted to make the female characters stronger in my new text. I decided to keep the scene since it was in both scripts; I needed to keep it in order to remain true to what seemed to be Inge’s true intentions; however, I used Madge 2 as a way to comment on the scene. I have Madge getting dressed in the window, while Madge 2 stands on the porch and watches Hal and Howard discuss Madge’s good looks. I did not add any lines for Madge 2, but in the staging, Madge 2 non-verbally reacts to the scene to achieve the desired effect.

The dance sequence created some difficulties, because in *Picnic* and *Summer Brave* Madge reenters the scene after getting dressed at different times. I had to remove certain sections
of the *Summer Brave* scenes I had added because I did not want Madge to reenter until the time she does in *Picnic*. I decided to leave Madge 2 onstage so she could witness the action. If the new text I was creating was a memory play, Madge needed to be present in order to remember the action of the play. Madge needs to witness the scene in some way -- either from the sidelines or eavesdropping out her bedroom window. Once Madge enters though, Hal is immediately drawn to her and they begin to dance. I debated about each Madge’s attitude toward Hal. Should the Madge from *Picnic* always fall under Hal’s charm? Should the Madge from *Summer Brave* be more resistant? While this might reflect the endings of each show, each Madge needed to have that moment of truly falling in love with Hal, unless I opted for the rape ending seen in *Front Porch* -- which I had already decided not to use. I used the dance sequence as one of those moments where Madge 2 lets down her guard and falls in love with Hal. There was a particular line in *Summer Brave* that was very fitting to include, which I included it right after Madge and Hal start dancing. Madge 2 watches from the sidelines and justifies why she lets herself dance with Hal: “Alan always says it’s all right for me to dance with other boys” (*Summer Brave* 49). This line allows Madge to reflect on why she let herself get caught up in Hal’s charm. Madge from *Summer Brave* does really have feelings for Hal but resists the temptation in Act Three.

During the dance sequence, Inge incorporates a scene in *Summer Brave* where Madge discusses how she was crowned Queen Neewollah. This scene had been presented earlier in *Picnic* during Act One. I decided to incorporate the scene twice, similar to the “pretty” scene discussed earlier, in order to reconfirm to the audience that Madge might not remember specifically when events happened in the past. Unlike the first time, where I had Madge 2 say the *Summer Brave* lines, this time I debated whether to have Madge or Madge 2 say the lines.
Should it be Madge 2 so it is clear that her timeline of events is different, or should it be Madge to clarify that she does not really remember the order? In the end, I decided to have Madge say the lines because it would not be repetitive for the audience. In my new text, the singer “Madge” is the one who is remembering the events – she sees both versions of herself but even within one version of Madge she could remember what she said differently. In hindsight looking at the text, I am not sure this idea is clear to the reader. It would be clearer if Madge 2 discussed Queen Neewollah in Act Two versus Madge. Rather than introducing another possible explanation for the repeating scenes, it would be clearer to just have Madge and Madge 2’s order of events to be slightly different, explaining the repeated scenes.

All these slight changes in the dance sequence lead to a more climatic moment for Rosemary, after she rips off Hal’s shirt sleeve, she attacks Hal’s faults. In reading all three texts, I decided this scene needed to be a climactic moment; this moment motivates the remainder of the text and Madge’s actions in each ending. In order to raise the tension I compared this scene in both Picnic and Summer Brave, Rosemary attacks Hal in both but she attacks more directly some of the things Hal had previously told Madge in the dance scene in Summer Brave. Also, Rosemary attacks Madge first before attacking Hal:

ROSEMARY: You come out here on the front porch, wearing your new dress, wearing my expensive perfume stuck behind your ears, and take him right out of Millie’s arms, I saw you. Don’t deny it.
MADGE: Millie didn’t want to dance.
ROSEMARY: There’s just too many worthless young men like you, runnin’ loose over the country today. No jobs, no responsibilities, spongin’ off decent, self-respecting people, tryin’ to make yourself a home where you’re not wanted. (Summer Brave 52)

I found Rosemary’s attack on Madge to be necessary in order to motivate Madge’s ending in Summer Brave. I included this moment because it provided a perspective that was not present in
Picnic. Inge had hinted at Rosemary blaming Madge in Picnic, but Howard interrupts Rosemary so she switches to discussing Hal instead. By including this attack on Madge, it could provide Inge the opportunity to disperse the blame, which he seemed to be hinting at in Picnic. This attack on Madge allowed me to have Madge 2 experience the Summer Brave ending. Through my understanding of the text, this scene causes Madge to reflect on whether she is trying to get the attention of men or wants to be independent. She realizes this is not what she intends to do or does not want to do any longer, which is why she chooses to remain behind and does not leave with Hal at the end of the show; she chooses independence versus men.

The rest of Rosemary’s explosion I kept intact; however, I did add some extra attacks towards Hal that were only in Summer Brave. These attacks are directed towards his claims that he could have had a successful life and he could have been cultured:

Rosemary: I saw through you right from the start. (Mocking.) My father, he was a very wealthy man. A very wealthy friend of his was gonna give me a very high position with his firm, but I wanta start in at the bottom. (Hal gulps. He winces with the pain of recognition.) It’s all a pack of lies. You never had pot.
Howard: (Shocked.) Rosemary!
Rosemary: Be quiet, Howard. I’m gonna read all the better books and listen to symphonies. I’ll bet you couldn’t recite the alphabet, and you couldn’t tell music from thunder. (Summer Brave 53)

This attack brings into question whether Hal is truthful or not in his storytelling. Based on the stage direction in the scene-- “wincses with the pain of recognition” --it appears that Hal was lying about those things in order to impress Madge. While it may seem clear that Inge intended for Hal to appear as a liar in this scene, it is important to consider the audience perception and how a director might stage that scene differently (the fourth crux). Would it be more interesting to know if Hal’s lying or question whether he is a liar or not? The second option would be more interesting for the audience. This could work in my new text because one Madge could realize
Inge’s idea that Hal is clearly lying while the other Madge could be more skeptical. In order to highlight the possibility of Hal not lying, I added the pantomime at the top of the show, as already discussed, but I decided to leave the stage direction in this scene in order to leave the possibilities open until I actual began the rehearsal process.

As discussed previously, the endings of *Summer Brave* and *Picnic* are where the arc of the two texts begin to diverge, so how do you take these two diverging storylines and create a cohesive text? To answer this question, I had to focus on my use of the two younger Madges and the order of the two endings. In my mind, when creating the text, the singer “Madge” was the primary Madge, she is reliving her youth through her memories, which is why she sees two versions of her younger self – the optimistic and the realistic Madge. In addition to the Singer, these two Madges would be seen throughout the show and present the two very different endings Inge had crafted. However, which of these two Madges should be the primary Madge? I needed to consider two of the historiography cruxes to answer that question: what was Inge’s intention and what would be the audience’s interpretation? Inge was not satisfied with the *Picnic* ending so he preferred *Summer Brave*, but audiences preferred *Picnic*. It was important to initially satisfy the audience’s expectations so that by the end of the show the audience would more readily accept the ending Inge preferred. I made the Madge seen in *Picnic* the primary Madge to begin with; the secondary Madge only has few lines in Act One. She is merely observing the action and reacting to the events the way she would have felt about them. As we progress into Act Two, the secondary Madge takes on a large role. She is onstage the entire act, even when her counterpart is offstage getting ready. She is also more vocal in this Act. I was hopeful the audience would begin to sense her growing presence. She continues to gain presence on stage
until the *Summer Brave* ending is presented. The primary Madge is not seen in that ending; only the secondary Madge remains. This growth of the secondary Madge motivated my second question about the arc of the new text – which ending should come first?

The order of the endings was something I struggled over for some time; there were reasons for and against each script being the final ending. I initially thought about having the *Summer Brave* ending first and then Picnic’s ending. This would be a great way to offer Inge’s preferred ending but still provide the audience with the happy ending they desired. However, I realized that showing the audience the romantic ending last, they would assume that ending was the real ending; however, I did not want the audience to believe a specific ending but instead be questioning which ending actually happened. I wanted them to question which ending was correct, but seeing the happier second ending would overshadow the first ending. In addition, having the *Summer Brave* ending first would have minimized the growth potential for the secondary Madge. Having the audience experience Madge leaving with Hal first and then seeing Madge choosing independence instead would be more powerful. I wanted the audience to see the secondary Madge grow into the primary Madge. My goal was to have the audience initially believe that the *Picnic* Madge was the primary Madge; however, by the end of the show the audience would realize the true Madge had been the *Summer Brave* Madge instead. The Singer remembers the *Picnic* Madge as the idealized version of herself, whereas the *Summer Brave* Madge is her realistic self. In order to communicate this to the audience, it was necessary to reverse my original idea about the order of the endings. This order works better because it provides the audience with the satisfaction of seeing the happy ending first but it quickly makes them question the first ending of the show when the scene starts over again with a different
Madge. By placing the *Summer Brave* ending second, it helps to showcase Inge’s true desires about the ending of the show and what truly happened to Madge. Madge’s declaration of independence also becomes stronger seeing it second. Providing this new arc could satisfy both the audience and Inge’s expectations.

Even though the arc may have been defined, the script still seemed choppy because I had intercut three scripts together and repeated some the same scenes twice. In order to make the script more fluid, I introduced music into the script to provide transitions. As the director of this new piece, I used the music to also help establish the tone and mood of the piece. I was initially only going to use music from the 1950s in order to solidify the time and place of the show; however, I began to find songs that were relevant to the text but were not from that time period. I realized I did not have to use all 1950s music. If I used 1950s music early in the script, it would help to establish the time period, but songs later in the show could focus on the emotional aspects of the text; so as the text progressed, the music becomes more modern. A couple of the songs I selected are important to discuss while some of the other songs I selected for the script could easily be replaced.

The song I selected for the top of show is “Summer Time,” which I decided to set the pantomime to. I selected this song because it has a very distinct bluesy feel to it, which sweeps the audience back in time, to the last long hot days of the summer. It helps to pull the audience out of today and transport then back in time. I timed the pantomime to the song; the pantomime begins with just the singer “Madge,” the audience then witnesses Hal being robbed before transitioning to Flo and Mrs. Pott’s backyard where we see the milk and paper being delivered, Madge and Flo having an argument, Madge 2’s entrance, and finally Hal’s arrival at Mrs. Pott’s.
This opening song helps to establish the mood, introduce the characters, and set up some of the conventions of the show.

The next important song, “I Don’t Know,” comes at the end of Act Two. This was one of the initial songs I selected for the show. I debated about where to place the song in the show but decided that the ending of Act Two was an appropriate spot because Madge has just decided to go with Hal to the Picnic. Madge 2 watches from the side reflecting on her own decision to leave with Hal. The lyrics really related to both Madges:

Should I let myself go
In his direction
Is his love strong enough
For my heart's protection
I don't know…
If I gave him my heart
Would he refuse it
Would he tear it apart
Or tenderly use it (Benton and Stevenson)

Both Madges are having this struggle to determine whether they should fall in love with Hal or stick with Alan. The singer also would be debating her choice to leave with Hal that night.

The next specific song, “One and Only,” opens Act Three. This is a modern song but the lyrics seemed relevant to Madge’s struggle to find true love and follow her heart. In addition to the main singer, there is a section with multiple singers, creating an echo type of effect. I thought it would be interesting to have the Singer “Madge” imagine the couples’ rendezvous during the picnic – Madge and Hal, Rosemary and Howard, and Madge 2 and Alan. Once the song got to the part with the multiple voices, the women would sing the first few lines, while the men sang the sections in parenthesis:

I know it ain't easy
Giving up your heart
I know it ain't easy
Giving up your heart (nobody's perfect)
I know it ain't easy (trust me I've learned it) (Wells, Wilson and Adkins)

The inclusion of this song gave the audience the opportunity to see what actually happened between the couples and not just hear them discuss it. Going back to the “rape” scene in *Front Porch*, I think Inge wanted to show the audience what happened at the picnic but was unable to because of the time period in which *Picnic* was performed on Broadway (the value system crux). Because it was now acceptable to be seen on stage, “One and Only” provided me the opportunity to adjust the script to include a possible depiction of what happened at the picnic.

The final important song included was “So Long,” another song I had initially picked. I wanted this to be the last song of the show. I wanted to use this song to tie up some of the loose ends and clarify my concept to the audience. The song would begin with the Singer “Madge” singing, then Madge would enter and begin to sing, and then Madge 2 would enter and sing. They would finish the song as a trio. My hope is that by seeing all Madges sing together at the end it would clarify that all three actresses are playing Madge. The lyrics were very powerful providing the audience with a haunting image of what happened to Madge:

So long,
hope we'll meet again some day.
Hope that maybe then you'll say,
"Darling, I was wrong."...
All alone,
with my memories of you.
I can see that you're lonely too...
So long, so long
though you leave me here to cry,
this can never ever be "goodbye."
We'll just say so long.
Though you leave me here to cry,
this can never ever be "goodbye."
We'll just say so long. (Spence et al.)
Did she leave with Hal? Did she regret it? Did he later leave her? Did she truly love him? Did she not leave with him at all? All these are questions I wanted the audience to ponder. The song highlights some of those possibilities and it also helps to reinforce Inge’s desire for a less romantic and happily ever after ending.

By analyzing Inge’s three texts through the four cruxes of historiography I was able to craft a new text, which attempted to satisfy both Inge and the audience. Reflecting back on the script, some of the sections could still use revision in order to make the story even stronger and more cohesive, which could be achieved through a workshop process or the rehearsal process for my production. I was able to explore the success and failures of the script through the rehearsal process. The next chapter will outline the success and failures of the new text that were discovered during the rehearsal process or through audience reactions to the production.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

While the goal of applying the historiography cruxes to multiple texts by the same author is to provide both the audience and playwright a more comprehensive version of the work, there are some possible difficulties that might arise from my new text, *William Inge’s Picnic*. This chapter will examine some of the downfalls of my new text and also examine some of the successes with the audience. My production in April 2012 allowed me to test the script I had created both in the rehearsal process and from the audience perspective. Through analyzing the successes and failures of my production and the new text, I will be able to determine which problems can be remedied with my new framework I developed.

One of the first possible problems with the new text is the inclusion of multiple Madges, particularly the two primary Madges in the script. The two Madges allow the audience to see multiple sides of the same character, sides Inge included in the different scripts, but having two of the same character could cause confusion for an audience. The audience may not understand who the secondary Madge represents. Is she the same character? Can people see her? The audience will have questions about Madge 2 in the first act because Madge is the primary character in Act One and the audience will see Madge 2 and wonder why this character is just present watching the action but not really a part of it. The confusion about Madge 2 is remedied once the audience sees the first scene in Act Two, the “what good is it to be pretty” scene. This scene should hopefully be when it finally clicks for the audience that Madge 2 is also Madge. This is a problem with my new text because this scene is approximately 45 minutes into the script, which is a long time for the audience to be questioning a certain character. When I began staging the show, I tried to find a way to clarify Madge 2’s character through blocking. Was
there a way to make it clearer that Madge 2 was present in the action? One thing I thought would help would be having both Madges in same color clothing. Having the two of them wear the exact same dress might be a bit too heavy-handed, but having the same color is a gentle clue to the audience that they are the same character. However, depending on the audience, it might have been necessary to place both Madges in the exact same outfit in order for it be clearer to the audience. Another element to consider was the staging of Madge 2. Where should she be placed on stage? Should she be able to move around the stage or be in a fixed corner of the stage like the Singer. While the second option may sound appealing, because it would provide a nice balance on each side of the stage and showcase Madge 2 and the Singer watching Madge, this option would not make much sense once Madge 2 started interacting in Act Two and Act Three. What was most important in the staging of Madge 2 was to determine how Madge 2 felt about the action taking place. Also to determine whether she is experiencing the action in real time like Madge or is she reflecting on the action like the Singer? These are two very different choices and it was important for myself and the actress playing Madge 2 to make a very clear and consistent choice in order to assist the audience as much as possible. The stronger choice was to have Madge 2 experience the show in real time with Madge; only the Singer is reflecting back on the action. This choice needed to be as clear as possible to the audience and it was not as clear as it could have been. Madge 2’s reactions should have more closely coincided with Madge’s reactions in order to clarify they are reacting to the same thing but in different ways. Looking back, this is definitely something I would have liked to have improved.

In retrospect, there are some changes to the script that also could be made in order to clarify who Madge 2 is earlier in the script. I could have tried to find a scene that could display
Madge 2 more prominently in Act One which could then be repeated in Act Two with Madge; the opposite presentation style of the “what good is it to be pretty” scene. Unfortunately, I could not find a scene that would work that way. Also, while staging Act One, I could have found more moments in the text for Madge that might have seemed like asides, and rather than have Madge say those lines, I could have changed them to Madge 2’s lines instead; this would have increased Madge 2’s stage presence and verbal interaction with other characters in Act One which hopefully would have clarified her role to the audience. However, even with these increased lines, there is still no guarantee the audience would understand that Madge 2 is also Madge; even if they do recognize she is supposed to be Madge, they may not understand whether Madge 2 is another Madge or Madge’s conscience.

This confusion over whether Madge 2 is the true Madge or her conscience was a problem I was worried about from the beginning, especially since I wanted the audience at the end of the show to realize that Madge 2 was the true Madge. Presenting the two endings helps to clarify that Madge 2 is not Madge’s conscience, but it comes so late in the show I was worried the audience will have already formed their opinions about Madge 2 and not be open to this shift I included at the end of the text. I could have tried to guide the audience more in the text but that would have required me to change Inge’s dialogue or add new dialogue, which violated what I was hoping to achieve with the piece by using the four historiography cruxes. So it poses the question: should the audience clearly understand who Madge 2 represents or could they be left with that question after the show? While I ultimately wanted the audience to understand Madge 2, I realized it might not be a bad idea for the audience still to be left questioning Madge 2 after the play ended.
I wanted the audience more actively engaged. It definitely left the audience with something to consider, something many audience members expressed they enjoyed.

This confusion about dual actresses playing the same character may not result from every new text created using the historiography cruxes I have outlined. Through my use of the four cruxes for this text I decided to incorporate three people playing the same character, but the historiography framework I have developed does not require a new text to have multiple versions of the same character. It is meant to provide the tools to develop a comprehensive text not necessarily the style to write this new text in. The dual actress problem was caused by my structuring of the text and not by the four historiography cruxes framework.

Another problem some audience members encountered was understanding who the Singer represented in the new text. It is never stated in the text who she is, and she does not have any interactions with the other characters in the show besides watching from the sidelines and reacting to the action. My goal was not to make it obvious to the audience who the Singer represents. I wanted it to slowly become clear by the end of the production. I included and staged the final trio between the Singer, Madge and Madge 2 in order to clarify the connection between them and assist the audience in understanding that the Singer is reflecting on her past. I was hopeful this staging would clarify my idea. Also, all three actresses had elements of the same fabric in their final costume. I did not want to blatantly tell the audience who the Singer represented so I resigned myself to the idea that only some of the audience might realize who the Singer is. This dilemma highlights some of the failures in my new script, which is how much should I lead the audience to understand the new structure and the new characters in the script? Should they struggle a bit? Is it acceptable if some of the audience does not understand
everything? These are all questions I pondered as the director during the rehearsal process. I tried to clarify the story and my intentions as much as possible but did not want to hand hold the audience too much.

Another concern I had about the script is the overall length of the text. The new text is approximately three hours long. When using the historiography cruxes, this could be a common problem that new scripts may encounter because there may be a desire to include more scenes in order to capture the playwright’s fullest intentions. A script like Picnic seems very long to modern audiences with its three-act structure. Modern audiences are accustomed to shorter, two-act plays. My new text takes the three-act structure and adds more material to it, including songs. I tried to remove elements from the text that were not part of the central storyline in order to counterbalance the new material, but it still resulted in a fairly long text. When using these historiography cruxes, the new writer or director needs to become a very critical editor. He needs to truly make sure that any additional material is truly necessary to the new script not just a scene the new writer liked? Also, it is important to realize that the primary text can be cut as well, not just added to. Another obstacle I encountered with my text is that I only wanted to have one intermission rather than two. I combined Act One and Act Two into one long act, approximately one hour and forty five minutes, a very long time for an audience to sit without an intermission. Reexamining the script and production, I realize it might be important to reconsider the inclusion of a second intermission or making the intermission earlier in the script. I initially did not want to interrupt the rising action, but audience comfort should have been considered. A new text may provide a fuller view, but if an audience becomes restless, it will not have as strong an impact as the script possibly could.
When combining texts like this one, another possible obstacle the director might face would be copyright restrictions. While both texts may be by the same author, the author has not intended for the scripts to be combined. This is something to keep in mind if one is thinking about combining multiple scripts, because it would be important to see if this can be done before working on the new script. If one is prevented from creating a new text, one could instead select the script he believes fulfills the playwright’s intentions based on analysis by the four historiography cruxes.

While there are some possible failures with this new text, it does provide some great benefits to the playwright and the audience. It presents the multiple perspectives of the characters and it also highlights how a playwright’s intentions with a script can change over time. These changing intentions are imbedded in various drafts of the same story and historiography cruxes allow one to uncover these intentions. My new text taps into Inge’s various intentions with each of his three scripts. It also provides the ending Inge wanted while also offering audiences the ending they desired. The new text provides a new way for the audience to engage with the script. While *Picnic* is a classic play, on the surface it may seem a bit outdated to modern audiences. This new text truly highlights the universal theme of desire for something more, whether it is romance or something else. It also allows the audience to respond directly to the text because they are forced to make a decision about what the ending means and represents. Do they believe in the happily ever after ending or the more realistic ending?

Through the use of the four historiography cruxes I was able to create a new text which, even with some flaws, presents a fuller perspective of Inge’s story. Flaws created by a new text should be addressed during the rehearsal or workshop process in order to try to make the script
clearer to the audience and more impactful. Some of the flaws could easily be remedied or changed, while others required more audience guidance which as the director will need to decide if they want to do or not.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

While the concepts of historiography have been traditionally reserved for the study of factual-based history and not for fictional events or people, I have discovered a way to apply them to theatrical texts. Both authors and historians create texts, which suit their own personal needs as well as societal expectations. This explains why there can be very different interpretations of the history as well as different versions of the same script. Through analyzing Thomas Postlewait’s article, Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes, I was able to develop my model of concepts to apply to fictional texts. This framework allowed me to develop what I considered to be the comprehensive text of the story; the script that attempts to best fulfills the playwright’s intentions while also satisfying the audience.

Of Postlewait’s twelve cruxes he applies when analyzing written history, four are important for theatre practitioners to use. Each of the four cruxes provides a unique perspective to analyze a script. The initial motivations crux allows one to analyze the causes, motivations, aims, and purposes of the initiating agent of a historical event. It is important for directors to attempt to understand the playwright’s motivations and goals when he was writing each version of the script in order to make informed decisions about how to apply each version towards the creation of a new text, which aims to capture the playwright’s evolving intentions and providing the most comprehensive account of the fictional event. The document survival crux allows one to analyze the conditions affecting the preservation and subsequent survival, however piecemeal and random, of the documents of record. When beginning to develop an ultimate version of a fictional work, it is important to question why one text is more popular than other versions of the same story or why one script has been produced more. The value system crux propels a
researcher to understand that the codes, values, and cultural system of the historian’s time period will shape our understanding of the text. The audience interpretation crux refers to the significance of understanding the formations, assumptions, values, and expectations of each person who reads history and attempts to understand what is written about the event. An audience member is going to bring his or her own background and ideas to a production, which will give each production and performance a unique meaning, both for the performers as well as for the audience. Through my case study using William Inge’s classic play *Picnic*, I argued that these four historiography cruxes can be a valuable tool for theater practitioners, either writers or directors, in developing new dramatic texts that synthesize various scripts into one new text. This historiography framework can be a valuable tool that can be used to develop a more comprehensive version of a script.

This methodology also can be applied to other texts besides *Picnic*. The four cruxes could be helpful when someone is trying to create a new text similar to what I attempted with *Picnic* or if one is trying to select the best version of a published script or translated work. If one is trying to create a new text, one could look at the various versions of a playwright’s script, as I did, and through those various versions determine which sections of the scripts best portray the playwright’s intention. One can also try to follow the structure of the play as closely as possible or add new elements. This style could be used on a lot of different plays from the 1950s. Inge was not the only playwright to adapt one-act plays into longer works like *Picnic*; Tennessee Williams used the same approach, including rewriting some of his full length works more than once. Another good application of the four cruxes would be to apply them to plays that have been translated from other languages into English. If a play has been translated a couple of times
by different translators, each version is going to be a little unique; it will either follow the 
original script word-for-word or it will be trying to capture the feeling of the original piece. One 
could use the four historiography cruxes in order to develop a consensus of these multiple 
translations. Once one has this consensus, he could either decide to create a new text or select the 
text which is the closest to what he feels best presents the playwright’s intentions as he 
understands them. Also, some other plays have been readapted by other playwrights or stories 
have been adapted into multiple different plays. One could apply the four historiography cruxes 
to determine which of these adaptations is the most comprehensive version rather than create a 
new text like I did.

These historiography cruxes also could be important for directors and actors to take into 
consideration. In order to get a fuller perspective of the characters, it might be valuable to look at 
the different versions of a script even, if a director or actor is part of the traditional presentation 
of a play. It might provide them new insights into a play, which they may not have realized 
before. For example, if an actor was playing Madge in a production of Picnic, it could be 
valuable for her to read Summer Brave because it provides a different choice Madge could make 
about Hal and why. This could provide more subtext for the moment when Madge decides 
whether to leave with Hal or not. It might also be interesting to read Front Porch, especially the 
rape scene between Hal and Madge; this provides an entirely new perspective for an actor or 
director, which could truly alter the staging or subtext of the scene.

This case study has provided me with what I consider to be the most comprehensive 
version of the Picnic story. When I first realized there were multiple versions of the same script, 
I was extremely curious to read them and understand why a playwright could rewrite the same
story three times? Was there something unique about each of the scripts? Did his intentions change? Through Postlewait’s article I was able to develop a way to process these three scripts and determine why they were different and why Inge added and removed certain elements from one script to the next. But it was Inge’s quote at the beginning of Summer Brave that really affected me, “I never completely fulfilled my original intentions in writing Picnic” (Inge x). I was surprised to learn that he was not satisfied with the play even though audiences and critics loved it. His reworking of the script into Summer Brave turned out to be successful only in his eyes. I wanted to develop a system through the four historiography cruxes that would provide a more comprehensive version of the script that would not only satisfy Inge but also the audience. Even with a few flaws I feel I achieved this goal. I realize there still are some possible difficulties with the new text, some of which I could have fixed. Also, there is really no way of knowing how Inge would feel but I hope he would be pleased with this new, more comprehensive play version. Inge labeled Summer Brave as “the rewritten and final version of the romantic comedy Picnic,” I would call my new text William Inge’s Picnic as the reimagined, audience provoking, and playwright satisfying version of Picnic.
APPENDIX: POSTLEWAIT HISTORIOGRAPHY ARTICLE
precious little historical evidence exists on the public or private lives of individual theatre performers before the Renaissance. A few names and anecdotes survive in the classical and early medieval records (Thespis, Quintus Roscius, Asopus, Vinialis). During the medieval age, various references to sceni (players), minstrels (minstrels), and stirione (actors) are documented, but these records do not offer descriptive lives of the actors. For several reasons, including their marginal status in society, performers did not warrant detailed personal attention. Nor, apparently, did they themselves provide self-descriptions in the form of letters, commentaries, or memoirs. The idea of doing so, even if they could write, probably did not occur to performers then, given their status, the place of theatre in medieval culture, and the religious and political conditions.

By the Renaissance, however, theatre people began to achieve a more notable place within society. The surviving records, besides naming individual clerics, clergymen, and other "amateurs" (including a few women) who acted in the religious drama, identify the growing number of professional troupes and players in secular drama. Though their move toward respectability was often slower than a rags-to-riches progress (especially in the imagination of the public), performers began to take on a new professional status not only as members of a social and economic group but as individuals. Italian actors emerged from the commedia dell'arte tradition of comic types to become known individually. Then, in the seventeenth century, for example, Tiberio Fiorillo, the famous "Scaramouch" of the Italian Company in Paris, became an international star. A similar process of emerging identification and fame for actors occurred in England: Will Kempe, Richard Tarlton, Robert Armin, Richard Burbage, Edward Alleyn. Some performers had their portraits painted; a few even accumulated sufficient wealth to purchase estates, an early sign that performers had begun to establish themselves in modern society.

The proliferation of legal records and commentary on performers was part of the general European growth of historical consciousness. Individuals, including theatre people, began not only to perceive but to distinguish their identity in the mirror of history—a history of self-discovery, self-distinction, and self-questioning. Of course, the printing press (along with the spread of vernacular education) offered the essential means for this new documentation, but the major religious, humanistic, capitalist, and scientific transformations of Western culture provided the underlying causes. These major changes contributed to the growth of cities, the centralization of audiences, the secularization of culture, the building of permanent theatres, and the commercialization of entertainment. At the same time, the royal systems of power and patronage, from the Florence of the Medici to the Paris of Louis XIV, enhanced the lives and importance of theatrical artists who were commissioned to demonstrate and celebrate—by means of festivals, masques, intermezzi, operas, and plays—the royal and aristocratic hold on power and wealth. All of these activities, aspects of the movable feast of Renaissance prodigality, though often pulling the theatre in opposing directions of patronage and commercialism, nonetheless situated theatre people increasingly at the center of the expansion of professional culture.

We can thus chart from the sixteenth century forward a process by which a multitude of performers, singers, designers, and managers entered the historical, if not always the social, registers. Soon theatre people achieved sufficient importance to warrant, or at least call forth, not only published commentaries on their professional activities but also reports on their off-stage lives—often written by others, but in time by the theatre artists themselves. In the seventeenth century, for actors and actresses alike, the commentary that inscribed the performer in his or her time—and subsequently in our historical reconstructions—was usually anecdotal, contractual, or procedural, much of it recorded unsystematically. By the eighteenth century, though, the publishing world provided information in abundance on and by performers. Newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books fed the public's new appetite for production reviews, gossip, encomium, satire, and slander on the performers' public and private activities. Although this interest in actors' lives on and off the stage was often salacious and the writing sometimes slanderous, the demand for publications became plentiful. Perhaps most significantly, the popular "memoir" (either an autobiography or a biography) was soon not only a common but a necessary adjunct to the role of theatre in society.

When Colley Cibber, for example, published his delightful Apology in
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740 (three more editions followed during his lifetime), he identified a special reason for the growing interest in actors, especially in accounts of their private lives:

A man who has passed above forty years of his life upon a Theatre, where he has never appeared to be himself, may have naturally excited the Curiosity of his Spectators to know what he really was when in no body's Shape but his own; and whether he, who by his Profession has so long been licentiously instructing his Benefactors, might not, when the Cost of his Profession was off, be quoted to be laughed at himself; or from his being often seen in the most flagrant and immoral Characters, whether he might not see as great a Rogue when he looks into the Glass himself, as when he is held to the others. 3

Chibber's division of the actor into public and private selves, in part a rhetorical device of enticement, was essentially a response to the contemporary critique of the stage. Traditionally, this criticism had been cast in moral terms but during the lifetime it was being increasingly formulated in social and psychological terms. Although acknowledging the moral issues, Chibber also appealed to the public's growing fascination with the nature of personal life in the theatre profession.

The case of David Garrick is illuminating, for, as the bibliographer Robert W. Lowe notes, "showers were written about everything he did." This great interest in Garrick resulted from his being the most famous actor of his era; but more significantly the same thing was, for Garrick as for any other actor, served to focus attention on acting as an emblem of power (though not necessary) split between not only character and performer but art and life.

This concern for the complex relation between intrinsic and extrinsic identity (previously dramatized, of course, by Shakespeare and other Renaissance playwrights as a condition of willful deception, mistaken identity, or the protean possibilities of role playing) had concentrated itself in the eighteenth century on a perceived gap between public behavior and private selfhood, between the artificial of social manners and the integrity of personal sentiment. In these terms, an accomplished actor such as Garrick served as a representative figure, a public and private individual to be investigated. Both his art, which so peculiarly overcame the distance between external performance and internal private passion (by means of native sensibility), and his life, which closed the social gap between an actor and a gentleman (by means of moral sensibility), offered reassuring evidence that the problem of a split identity was essentially solvable. 4

Yet despite the widespread cult of sensibility, which can be seen as a cultural attempt to sanction private feeling as a measure of public ethics, the problematic relation between inner and outer identity continued to concern many observers. It was to be expected, then, that actors' lives as well as acting techniques served as touchstones for these concerns. Indeed, the great playwright Denis Diderot, in Paradoxe de l'Auteur, represented the actor's split identity as a philosophical issue for the age. He took up a theoretical debate on the topic of technique versus emotion to illustrate a cultural condition, the problem of sincerity, of true selfhood and expression. 5

This same problem was also finding expression in two narrative genres that achieved maturity in the eighteenth century: the novel and autobiography (e.g., Fielding's Tom Jones and Rousseau's Confessions). Of course, Rousseau's achievement was to transform autobiography into a quintessential form for representing the dynamic tension between public and private identities, for demonstrating, that is, the art of self-dramatization. Surprisingly, there has been little study of the cultural relations between the increase in interest in the lives of actors and the growth of autobiography, even though during the eighteenth century (and even since) acting and autobiography alike have offered culturally significant modes for representing and dramatizing the dialectical relation between appearance and reality, falsity and truth, surface and depth, social roles and psychological being, performance and existence. Thus, Garrick the actor and Rousseau the autobiographer can be seen as quintessential figures (and rhetorical formations) of the era. Diderot's deliberation on the paradox of the impersonal actor served as the timely complement to the growth of theatre autobiographies and biographies during this period. Romanticism accelerated these concerns and modes of expression.

Since the eighteenth century, the publication of theatrical autobiographies has increased in number, consistent with the enormous growth of performance in its various forms and appeals. An expansive "public appetite for gossip" provided, as Fanny Kemble acknowledges on the first page of Recollections of a Girlhood, sufficient cause and justification for publishing "gossip about myself." Even before the twentieth century, the supply and demand for such "gossip" had become an industry, mandating the growth of the entertainment industry. Today autobiographies, memoirs, reminiscences, recollections, self-edited diaries, self-selected letters with constructing commentaries, dictated memoirs (often prepared by a collaborator or ghost writer), articles and publicity handouts provided for newspapers and magazines, and television interviews (which increasingly are used by performers as a substitute for or supplement to self-written reports)—all
pour out in enormous quantities to a public that cannot get enough information about actors and other performers, our secular saints and sinners. Since the medieval age, performers have gone from historical nonentities to the idols of the marketplace. In the process, the lives of the saints have been swept away by the lives of the actors—a cultural transformation of theatre, social and moral values, and the idea of identity itself.

For the theatre historian and biographer, this supply of information is an apparent godsend. In English alone, discounting unpublished letters and diaries, there are several thousand theatrical autobiographies (my general term here for published self-reports in various forms that reveal aspects of a career in the performing arts). Their value is immeasurable, for they give us, in historical abundance, the direct report, the inside story on events, personalities, and organizations.

But how direct? And how reliable and forthcoming are they? Though possibly derived from diaries, appointment books, or scrapbooks of press cuttings, theatre autobiographies are often notable more for their well-rehearsed anecdotes than for their accuracy on productions, people, and places. Typically, they are episodic, choppy, and, of course, self-aggrandizing. Their defining character, and often their charm, depends upon the self-serving performance of the autobiographer, a mask moved from stage to page. This characteristic trait of playing to the audience is hardly a failing—unless one demands introspection and cultural interpretation from all autobiographies—but it does present special problems for the theatre historian and biographer.

For instance, Philip Highfill, Jr., one of the editors of A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800, has identified “the problem of anecdotal evidence” as the primary factor that threatens the scholarly methodology and integrity of the Dictionary. Though he argues that anecdotes cannot simply be dismissed, for some are “eminentely believable,” he nevertheless gives a general warning: “credibility is seldom certain.” The theatre historian and biographer, though understandably fascinated by a good story, must question this evidence most carefully.

It is true that many theatre autobiographies, despite their anecdotal embellishments, supply us with valuable information. Also, some of them, such as those by Fanny Kemble, Joseph Jefferson, and Ethel Waters, provide evocative pictures of theatrical and social culture. Yet even the most matter-of-fact memoir is not without narrative qualities. Of course, the autobiographies we tend to prize most are those that often beguile us with their literary skills of character drawing, scene setting, and storytelling. They reveal the creative and inventive imagination at work. For this reason, Leslie Stephen argues that “in an autobiography, since all books, may be more valuable in proportion to the amount of misrepresentation which it contains.” A historian, less interested in literary achievement, might well protest, but the fact still remains that all autobiographies represent the historical in narrative terms.

No doubt it is often possible for theatre historians to identify factual errors and unreliable anecdotes. Yet often we have corrected specific data, we still are faced with the formal aspects of autobiographies—their style, voice, plotting, characterization, typology, themes, and genre—that define them, at least in part, as literary texts. No neat distinction between history and fiction is possible because autobiography and the novel have developed in sibling forms, especially since the eighteenth century. For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft’s autobiography, Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Wollstonecraft, Composed by Herself (2 vols.; London: C. Chappell, 1807), with its “chequered passage” of “our heroine” through adventures, distresses, intimacies, persecutions, seductions, criminal prosecutions, and imprisonment, realizes all of the defining traits of the picturesque novel. Mrs. Wollstonecraft, as a narrative character, comes close to being the theatrical reincarnation of Molière’s Tartuffe. Her autobiography, like the famous Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Clarke (1789), provided the audience of her time with a familiar narrative version of the adventures of an outcast woman. Whether true or false, it is an intriguing story, written under conditions of economic distress to attract a paying audience.

Less sensational autobiographies, though apparently more reliable, still draw upon a full range of narrative devices. For example, Fanny Kemble’s series of multivolume and quite popular autobiographies were written and received as scrupulous reports on her activities and the social conditions of her age, yet these volumes reveal numerous traits and conventions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. Indeed, a study of her writing style and sensibility, as affected by her reading habits and tastes, would be valuable. Kemble was assiduously well read, so all of her works show signs of various literary influences from the novelists, poets, and essayists of England, France, and Germany. Her writings invite, but so far have not received, a careful literary analysis. Her episodic mode of self-representation gives the autobiographies a documentary quality, but even her earliest letters reveal a calculated literary style, a creative shaping of narrative voice. We need to ask to what extent these autobiographies exist not only as historical records but as episodal fictions. Consider her first autobiography,
Record of a Girlhood, written in 1839, but dealing with her life in the 1820s and 1830s. Among its literary influences, we can find signs of Charles Dickens' novels, especially *Dombey and Son* and * Bleak House*, as in the recurring theme of financial devastation from a Chancery law case; the evocative, sometimes sentimental picture of relations between children and parents; the heartstirring, yet slightly patronising attitude toward working people; and her self-presentation as a Victorian heroine of self-sacrifice. Of course, much of what she wrote was true to her social and psychological life as a woman in Victorian culture, but her manner of writing was in large measure self-consciously literary. So, too, was her purpose.

Although most performers have not developed their literary sensibility in the manner of Fanny Kemble, they have still been influenced by the novel when they came to write their autobiographies. In fact, we might well argue that the less aware a writer is of literary models and styles, the more that writer will necessarily take up and be controlled by the dominant modes and models of the age. This literary influence on autobiographers comes in part from popular novels, but also, especially since the nineteenth century, from stage memoirs, which conventionalized many literary features and thereby became models for how to write an autobiography. More recently, both film and television have provided narrative versions of actors' lives that influence the subject matter and writing style of memoirs. So, just as Mary Wollstonecraft's memoir reveals many of the features of the picaresque novel, a modern autobiography may well be dominated by the narrative themes, conventions, and stylistic techniques that commonly appear in popular novels, films, television stories, newspapers, magazines, and recently published autobiographies by performers.

Moreover, most theatre autobiographies, like most vocational autobiographies and novels, tend to represent the development of the author's career as a coherent, unified, and teleological process, even though the earlier self, when recalled clearly, may well be a stranger, as Elizabeth Robins acknowledged when, fifty years after the fact, she wrote about her first year in London:

"I write about those days at a great distance—not only in terms of time, I cannot feel very close to that young woman who wrote about myself many years ago. In the interval, I have thought a great deal about the people who were there. She was often strange, sometimes unapproachable, hard and then incredible, but the self-construction that leaves me in the face from the scribbled page [of saved diaries]. There, too, I am often at odds with her. She records scenes and feelings I have clear forgotten; she leaves out some that in my memory stand fast forever. And the omissions, that I have now in mind, are not those prompted by discretion. They are mere failure to recognize values."

Those changing values, even more than passing decades, are often so substantial as to make consistency of personality in life, if not autobiography, impossible.

This problem of presenting oneself in a narrative is also complicated by literary techniques of characterization. Specifically, an autobiography, in its rhetorical and formal features (if not always in its author's conscious intentions), establishes and mediates the relationship between the writer and the desired reader by means of the narrative "I." This figure of selfhood, however historical it is supposed to be, is divided in narrative terms into three different persons: the author, the character (whom Robins calls the "other Me"), and the narrator (or implied author). The author is outside the text and after the events, making decisions about what to report. The character is the figure within the text who gets reported (or created). And the narrator is the fictional voice that defines the report's stylistic tone and attitude (toward character and audience). The three persons are interrelated but not interchangeable.

The character, even though a version of the writer, is a created identity, a representative figure of the author's idea of self. By means of not only available documents but also calculated hindsight, faulty memory, and self-deception, the author selects the significant and crucial events that point toward the person (or personality) the author has become—or, more exactly, the person the author desires the reader to see and value. The life is given a direction and meaning, culminating in the present self, but this causal order is retrospectively imposed through an act of reasoning (and rationalizing) backward. As Noél Coward warns in his own autobiography: "It is a tricky business tracing the development of a character along the avenues of reminiscence." An idea of selfhood is achieved; an idea of achievement is given selfhood.

Beyond these aspects of the double identity of author and character, there is the third person: the narrator who exists as a voice, a style, an attitude that mediates between character and author as well as character and reader. This voice or "delivery" makes manifest not only the main character in the autobiography but all the other characters who are there to serve the primary function of revealing—or concealing—aspects of the protagonist. A strong narrator or narrative voice, such as Joseph Jefferson's...
or Sarah Bernhardt, can create, by means of a unified style, an apparent resolution of the opposition between author and character. But this rhetorical success in creating and sustaining a stylistic process of literary figuration, while pleasing to the literary critic, should be troubling to the theatre historian. To the degree that a theatre autobiography triumphs in overcoming the separation of these three persons, it creates major problems in historical reliability.

Besides these literary aspects of narrator, character, and author, there are generic traits of topic, theme, scene, and plot in autobiography that define and shape what gets reported. In fact, no writer can avoid following at least some common traits. Some autobiographies seldom deviate from stereotypically conventional. Of course, history provides the basic conditions for personal experiences, attitudes, and values. But autobiography calls forth conventional modes of expression, which at one point or another tend to take on a life of their own, whether or not the writer actually had the experience.

Perhaps the generic demands are most evident in the formal order of the plot itself. Autobiography has often followed a pattern of narrative development from childhood through journey to crisis, conversion, and confession. Theatre autobiographies have some of these features, but they are usually more committed to vocational narration than to introspection and self-judgment. The public’s judgment sanctions the performer’s life. Still, the conventional patterns are regularly apparent: a life of innocence (or enclosure), paradise lost (or confinement escaped), struggle, journey and quest, discovery and appreciation by others (which, in turn, often leads somewhat later to a moment of self-assessment), success, public glory (usually at the price of personal hardship), and abundant recompense, as viewed retrospectively. This basic plot is vague enough to accommodate many different versions of events at each stage of the life. Yet, by means of this distribution, the particular actions embedded in the general narrative serve to illustrate its common meanings (which can range from the melodramatic to the mythic).

Thus, despite the guidance of memories and documents, what one recalls and identifies as one’s own experiences may be instead culturally shared, recurring narratives. For example, childhood memories, which appear as distanced experiences, are commonly re-collected not only faithfully but conventionally. In the words of Ethel Barrymore: “One may write about the child one was with the same freedom that a novelist creates a character. There is no fear of egotism, for the portrait is one of faint colors, and the incidents that crowd in on any small life are incidents of childhood rather than of a particular child.” These incidents, while no doubt grounded in the basic conditions of the way one was raised, quite often are shaped by literary conventions. For example, when we consider how childhood regularly gets represented in nineteenth-century poetry and fiction, it is hardly surprising that many performers writing during and just after this period evoke childhood in either a Wordsworthian (Lillian McCarthy, Lillie Langtry, Johnston Forbes-Robertson) or a Dickensian (Constance Collier, Elsa Lanchester) mode. Some, such as Ellen Terry, give us both modes.

Beyond childhood, the memories may be less formulaic, but still the autobiographies (and the biographies based upon them) quite often chart a life story according to standard plot conventions. Within these standard “chapters” or “stages” of a life, theatre autobiographies commonly develop additional standard topics, including the emotional reports of first appearances and opening-night anticipations, the comic stories of stage mishaps and pranks, the descriptions of professional camaraderie, the demonstrations of how performers care for one another, the series of anecdotal tributes to character actors (and to actors as characters), the actor’s tall tale (usually taller the further abroad one goes), the moral exemplum on economic frugality or the confession of financial prodigality, the name-dropping catalogues of the famous, the commentaries (often vague) and the anecdotes (usually unreliable) on acting methods, and the chronicles of hardships faced and overcome (often matched by a sad, sympathetic fable of another performer who has been defeated by age, misfortune, or personal vice).

Of course, no single autobiography presents all of these composite traits. All autobiographies have their own specific stylistic and historical qualities. The form and content of these works vary from period to period, writer to writer. Indeed, we read them, sometimes avidly, for their specificity, their historical picture of a time and place. Obviously, then, formal patterns in autobiographies need to be considered within the context of historical conditions. Performers, working together in the theatre and sharing similar cultural experiences and values, reveal (and conceal) many of the same attitudes, experiences, and beliefs. The difficulty for the theatre historian is to figure out how the historical and literary factors (the social and artistic cultures) intermix to create an autobiographical mode of expression.

In the final analysis, historical and fictional discourses cannot be separated from their intensional, social, and cultural functions. Therefore, just as we investigate the conditions, aims, and values of theatre, we need to...
ask, period by period, what are the generic, social, financial, vocational, and moral functions of auto-biographies. For example, what, in Proust’s terms, are the possible “rules of formation” in a particular period that called forth certain narratives to the exclusion of others? What modes of self-representation tended to recur? What ideas of the performer and the theatre did these works attempt to meet or displace? What ideologies operated, explicitly and implicitly? Were there any discernible patterns in form, theme, characterization, and style? In turn, were there key matters that the writer excluded, falsified, denied, or failed to perceive?

The social context for an autobiography always shapes the writer’s discourse. It also shapes the audience’s response. We need to consider, therefore, not only the writer’s idea of the audience’s expectations, as foreseen in the writing process, but also the reader’s ideas of the actor and the theatre that contribute to the ways the work was read (and is read by us). For each period, what was the theoretical context between the writer’s report of personal information and the reader’s trust, between calculated self-revelation and reader sympathy? Supposedly the contract of autobiography is based on truth, but is this really the operating principle for writer and reader?

From the viewpoint of reception, we need to keep in mind that theatre autobiographies, like all autobiographies, have at least two audiences: the members of one’s intimate circles, including those of family and profession, and the general public. The writer tries to shape the story of a life to inform, please, convince, counter, and control both audiences. But sometimes, in serving one audience, the writer may not satisfy the other. So decisions have to be made throughout not only on what can or cannot (should or should not) be said but on how things are said.14 The historian needs to evaluate the writer’s intentions in terms of both audiences—and also to see that each of these audiences can often be divided into subgroups.15

Also influencing each autobiographer are those personal friends, enemies, family members, lovers, employers, advisors, and critics whose one may or may not name and discuss out of a sense of pride, respect, obligation, discretion, intimacy, dislike, fear, regret, or shame. Their presence or absence in an autobiography may be misleading, if not purposefully deceptive. Finally, beyond these many faces of the audience, there is also that faceless one: the frame, which is another name for the abiding memory of the readers and historians for whom one also presents the life story, not only as a stay against mortality but as an attempt to establish one’s place in the judgments of theatre history.

Perhaps even more to the point, the performer’s autobiography, besides being a record of accomplishment, is an appeal for approval for recognition, for applause, for love. The loving, even dictating, gaze of the spectator and reader constitutes the performer’s existential as well as professional mission to be recognized (not necessarily known, which is often the fearful condition of incompleteness or emptiness that performance may help overcome or avoid). Given this need for recognition, as the form of self-identification, the task in writing becomes far more complex and important than just communicating to an audience the truth behind or beneath appearances. The dilemma, at least at the level of the modern mythology of fame, is the desire to be valued as a masked being, a performing self, and yet still to be loved despite this self-displacing (and sometimes self-denying) need for performance. Whatever the performer’s impulse in autobiography to reveal the secret or unmasked self, there is also a strong need to maintain the achieved self, which is the basis of fame and love.

Quite apparently, then, theatre autobiographies cannot be read as straightforward historical documents. But we should not assume that because they have narrative qualities they lack historical truth. Autobiographies require interpretation, not just reading, into and false categories. The theatre historian, in search of the performer “in Nobody’s Shape but His Own,” may well find not only that no clear separation can be established between face and mask, presence and absence, private and public personality, life and art, but also that even these dualisms are too neat because they split identity, document, and historical conditions in ways that are reductive. Our task is to understand how and why historical meanings are embedded in narrative forms, not to ignore, deny, or dismiss such formal qualities. Indeed, at the levels of sense, structure, and temporality, history is narrative, as Paul Ricoeur argues: “The form of life to which narrative discourse belongs is our historical condition itself.”16 By way of illustration, I want to look at some distinctive features of certain autobiographies by actresses. In order to focus my comments, I consider autobiographies by English and American women performers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What follows, I must insist, is not a summary of women’s lives in the theatre, nor a poetry of actresses’ autobiographies.

Ackerson’s autobiographies of this period, though apparently similar in many ways to those written by men, reveal some definitive, if not always exclusive, features that recur enough to invite consideration as special attributes. Why this is so and how it operates should be discernible, at least in general ways, when we consider women’s history. No doubt, men and
women of the same culture share many similar experiences and values. Since the Renaissance, actors and actresses have increasingly become part of a shared community. Yet throughout history, women's lives, under varying conditions of patriarchy, have developed differently from men's in psychological, social, vocational, and biological terms. The resulting distinctions are not easy to categorize or analyze—whatever their bases in ideologies of gender—but they still shape aspects of women's (and men's) lives. Surely, then, these differences must also affect the writing of autobiography.  

Most actresses, for instance, report the development of their careers in terms of such recurring general topics as ties with and breaks from family, dependency on men, moral honor and rectitude (which my wife means sexual identity, practice, and values), defense and demonstration of their roles as mothers, wives, sisters, or unmarried women, and alternating moods of hope and discouragement. More specifically, these topics get developed in certain narrative moments, such as, for example, the crucial meeting—the encounter that provides the opportunity or catalyst for success. Narrative requires turning points: in women's autobiographies these moments often a meeting with a grand man of the theatre, are typically fortuitous and unexpected, as if these actresses depended upon luck, grace, and the goodwill of others rather than their own determination. Yet, in most cases, these women were persevering, even tenacious, in their careers, however much they may have masked their ambition. They had to be strong-willed or they would not have succeeded in a very competitive and often cruel profession. Still, as they report matters, their own ambitions and contributions are seldom acknowledged.

If we are to believe Marie Wilson, for example, it never once occurred to her to become a theatre manager until her brother-in-law suggested the idea and then provided the money. In similar manner, Ethel Barrymore, seemingly helpless in launching her London career, depended upon the intervention of Henry Irving, a beneficent deus ex machina as he reported matters; Lillian Gish's career at a crossroads, walked in the door and meet Bernard Shaw just when he was looking for someone to play Am Whitfield in Man and Superman; and Elizabeth Robins, almost ready to accept a terrible contract, was conserved away from potential disaster by Oscar Wilde and Herbert Beerbohm Tree. In fact, Robins spent over a hundred pages of her autobiography, Both Sides of the Curtain, dramatizing, with self-flattery, her various meetings with these and other grand men, as she tried to find a way to get on the stage in London. (Another irony, as she expressed it, was that two actresses, Mrs. Kendal and Genevieve Ward, were the ones who provided the first London role, not any of the great men.) This recurring trait of the crucial meeting, though having a basis in the operating conditions of the theatre, should put us on guard because of its conventionality. As reported, it may hide as much as it reveals about an actress' career, her sense of self, and the nature of directive power. Here, for example, is a seemingly irresistible moment for readers and biographers: Ellen Terry's dramatization of how she returned to the stage, after spending six years in domestic solitude with Edward Godwin, the father of her two children, Edith and Gordon Craig.

Oh, blissful quiet days! How soon they came to an end! Already the shadow of financial trouble fell across my peace. Yet still I never thought of returning to the stage. One day I was driving in a narrow lane, when the wheel of the pony-cart came off. I was standing there, thinking what I should do next, when a whole crowd of horsemen in "pink" came leaping over the hedge into the lane. One of them stopped and asked if he could do anything. Then he looked hard at me and exclaimed: "Good God! it's Nelly!"

The man was Charles Reade [the playwright].

"Where have you been all these years?" he said.

"I have been having a very happy time," I answered.

"Well, you've had it long enough. Come back to the stage!"

"No, never!"

"You're a fool! You ought to come back."

Suddenly I remembered the bailiff in the house a few miles away, and I said laughingly: "Well, perhaps I would think of it if one would give me forty pounds a week?"

"Done!" said Charles Reade. "I'll give you that and more, if you'll come and play Philippa Chetwin in The Wondering Hare."  

What could be more of a Victorian melodrama, right down to the bailiff in the house and the sudden rescue? Yet the many biographers of Ellen Terry have repeated it, only occasionally admitting even parenthetically that it might not be true or that it might serve purposes other than direct reporting.

Edith Craig warned that her mother romanticized the period of retreat, but it was Gordon Craig, in his soggy, unreliable little book Ellen Terry and Her Secret Self, who came closest to interpreting the theatrical, if not the factual, import of this little drama. Craig treated it as a melodramatic version of paradise lost: the tempter seduced Ellen from her husband.
Reads, "like some ludicrous Mephistopheles," tempted her back to the stage. Read's triumphant "Done!" is, in Craig's opinion, "almost like the words of Faust—one expects to see a flash of red light." This version (with its probable origins in Craig's memory of Irving's production of Faust) may not be the melodrama that Ellen Terry intended, but surely Craig was right to see that she had created, right down to her famous exclamation mark, a highly theatrical (and possibly obfuscating) explanation for her return to the stage. It hid the fact, for example, that she had already made at least one visit (and likely others) to London before this, thus restablishing her theatre contacts. Given the financial and emotional problems she was having with Godwin, she may well have determined to take charge of her life.

At the very least, whatever her ambivalence and possible guilt about abandoning her domestic role, she wanted to contribute to her children's welfare. How else but the stage? She felt the pull of her professional life, the desire to be welcomed back into the theatre community. She does not admit this directly, but she concludes the chapter on "the simple life" of retirement with a revealing anecdote, a story about a circus goat that pined away in rustic retreat, desiring "the lights of the circus, the lively conversation and the applause of the crowd." Although provided with "the free run of the garden," the goat was ungrateful; only when it returned to the ring was it happy: "You can't force a goat any more than you can force a child to live the simple life." Or, for that matter, any more than you can force Ellen Terry—once she had determined to return to the stage.

Of course, chance and good fortune attend many lives in the theatre; serendipity does play its role for men and women alike. But what stands out in the actresses' autobiographies is the way the crucial meeting gets enhanced and elaborated not just as an anecdote but as a regular generic trait that gives power to men and dependency to women. A version of sexual and social subordination gets expressed, in the voice of gratitude, as a story of need, rescue, and feminine respect for male authority. But is this report simply a matter-of-fact description of the actress' experiences, personal feelings, and sense of self? Or is something calculated and perhaps misleading being described? Even after we give fair consideration to the social and economic history that indeed gave men the controlling power in the theatre, we still must consider the possibility that these actresses may be hiding their own contributions to the development of their careers. But why? If their reports are misleading and unreliable, what is the purpose, besides a good anecdote?

Part of the answer can be found in another pervasive feature of actresses' autobiographies: the presentation of oneself as a divided being, a public and private person. Of course, as noted above, the split between mask and face is an abiding aspect of the historical and aesthetic conditions for performers since the Renaissance. Their autobiographies, then, are supposed to be their mode of revelation, their way of taking off the cost of the profession, as Gibber says. But even a behind-the-scenes look at the profession is selective.

To be expected, much about private life goes unmentioned in late Victorian and early-modern autobiographies. For men and women alike, a code of separate spheres became pervasive in social conduct and writing. Most men of the era usually treated private matters as irrelevant to a report on public life. The career is the essential thing: the source of identity, the achievement of independent character and willpower. The public life defined male identity. Reports on private life—the family home, the good wife and children, the fishing trip, the mountain hike—served primarily to humanize the character of the public man, whose sense of professional mission and determination provided the crucial narrative.

Women likewise obscured private matters. Yet for women autobiographers, including performers, this separation of public from private proved to be difficult in both life and writing. For actresses, this division between public and private selves was especially troublesome because of their high visibility before a public that desired to look behind the scenes at their supposedly unconventional activities. Women professionals, few in number, did not feel that private life was irrelevant to public life, but for various reasons they were quite reticent about discussing the details of their private lives. Yet they faced a dilemma: if they did not discuss their private affairs, the assumption was that they had something (usually sexual) to hide. But to provide details made them vulnerable to attacks, misunderstandings, and demands for more information. Moreover, from society's viewpoint, the private realm was supposed to be a woman's natural abode. To step beyond it into a profession was an act of both abandonment and inversion. The line between private and public thus became charged with significance. Isadora Duncan may overstate the case, but she surely speaks for many women autobiographers: "No woman has ever told the whole truth of her life. The autobiographies of most famous women are a series of accounts of the outward existence, of petty details and anecdotes which give no realization of their real life. For the great moments of joy or agony they remain strangely silent." Apparently, when writing an autobiography, professional women find it difficult to articulate—or perhaps even to locate—the problems they face.
them, at that time, married into the aristocracy—it was as if Nature were fortifying herself and using the blood and strength of these magnificent plebeians to build a finer race.” This kind of obligatory denial, whether true or false, seems to be both a generic and a historical feature of the autobiographies. Today, of course, sexual life is usually acknowledged, with an equally generic and historical obligation, but this is only the other side of the same coin: the commerce in actresses’ sexuality, whether denied, veiled, or revealed.

Certain methods and patterns have evolved in autobiographies for countering, displacing, obscuring, or ignoring the sexual issue. For example, as part of the theme of altruism, mentioned by Spacks, actresses have usually insisted that they are good mothers, good wives, good sisters, good colleagues. They are “useful,” Ellen Terry’s favorite word for herself; they are attentive; they are caring, loving, and generous. Whatever the nature of their domestic affairs, they feel a need to spell out their commitment to duty and discipline, to hard work and self-control. The onus of their professionalism has required a moral rhetoric of decency and goodness, even when their behavior has been above reproach. Consequently, actresses have attempted to prove that their careers, instead of being corrupting, provide a healthy environment for family and women in general. In Lilah McCarthy’s words: “No other art makes such demands upon self-control; and I believe that no other art develops character as well, at all events in a woman.” To note the pervasive emphasis on goodness is not to deny the reports, but we should also ask why this insistence is necessary and what other matters it displaces.

Of course, doubts and guilt do find expression, sometimes obliquely, as in the case of Gertrude Lawrence’s seemingly lighthearted anecdote about a statement her teenage daughter Pamela made to a reporter: “She gave the journalist a good story—about how her mother really disliked her work and would prefer to stay at home and live a quiet, retired life away from the stage, of which she was tired.” Might we not conjecture that a daughter’s wish surfaced in the autobiography as an unresolved conflict between private and public life for the mother?

In accord with the good woman theme, the autobiographies generally lack insistence upon ambition and self-denunciation, as we saw in the reports on crucial meetings with men. In fact, self-interest in the form of ambition is seldom acknowledged. When admitted, it is balanced, often within a page or two, by an example of self-sacrifice, duty, service, or womanly passivity. Thus, on the one hand, actresses often have attempted in their autobiographies and their lives to avoid being contained by other people’s sexual and social definitions of them; but, on the other hand, they have underplayed or denied their own assertive selfhood. More to the point, they have characterized themselves (quite sincerely much of the time, but not without some possible calculation) as existing in relation to—in service to, in fulfillment of—another person or idea or purpose. That “other” can be a husband, a lover, a director, children, God, stage roles, the public, or another woman. Yet this other is almost never history, the era, the spirit of the times, the culture, the arts—as it is commonly for strong-willed men who see themselves as the expression and embodiment of these large forces. (In this sense, for self-possessed men there is no other, just the extensions of self, mirrored in people’s responses to them.)

In women’s autobiographies in general this relation to the other is a recurring pattern: Margaret Cavendish and the duke of Newcastle, Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, Hilda Doolittle and Sigmund Freud, Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre. So, too, in the theatre: Mr. and Mrs. Charles Calvert, Ellen Terry and Henry Irving, W. H. and Madge Kendal, Eva Moore and Harry Raymond, Constance and Frank Beards, Mabel and Wilfred Pickren, Isadora Duncan and Gordon Craig, Elia Kazan and Charles Laughton. Eva Moore titled separate chapters in her autobiography “Harry, the Man,” “Harry, the Playwright,” and “Harry, the Actor.” She printed many letters to him, few to herself. Marie Winslow and Squire Bancroft even wrote their autobiographies together, alternating section by section, page by page, even though she was the one who successfully transformed and managed the Prince of Wales Theatre. Any suggestion that the woman is more important than the man is almost always avoided, as Madge Kendal insisted: “My husband never was my leading man. I was always his leading lady.”

Historically, then, this emphasis upon the other expresses the conditions under which women have lived, their relation to men’s social values, prejudices, and controls. It also may express the woman’s communal values and sensibilities that manifest themselves, both because of and in spite of social conditions. And, as I have implied, these recurring motifs and themes may get reported not only to put forward an acceptable version of the actress as woman (mother, wife, sister, friend) but also to hide or deny aspects of self that the actress, as professional woman and private person, feels cannot be reported without negative consequences.

Whatever the case, the issue is not simply that actresses subordinate themselves to others, in order to be valued and valuable. Of course, the
approval that comes from a loving mate, a dependent child, or an adoring public is a common and primary process for all of us in establishing our self-identity. But more than this, these actresses, though they have been self-willed women who have achieved much on their own terms, go out of their way, with a few exceptions, to offer a life story that credits to others key aspects of their strength, their purpose, their identity. Granted, they may also complain about what Gertrude Lawrence calls the "paternalist age." And they may attack male egotists, as Wells, Terry, and Waless do. But this disapproval reinforces their descriptions of their own selflessness.

This investment of the other, a process of authorizing a split self, should not simply be mistaken, however, for subservience. Self-displacement is not necessarily self-effacement. As Mary G. Mason points out: "This recognition of another consciousness—and I emphasize recognition rather than deference—this grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, seems . . . to enable women to write openly about themselves." Sometimes, perhaps; but whatever the case, whether it be a sign of acquiescence or liberation, this process of splitting identity—not only between self and other but between public and private identities—appears to be not just a common trait but an abiding condition of most women's autobiographies.

The task for the theatre historian is to understand why these various divisions, displacements, and denials of self occur. Sometimes these autobiographies express in various degrees of reliability the actual conditions and values of the actresses. But often, for whatever reasons, the versions of self are misleading and incomplete, thus requiring a select judgment if not skepticism from the theatre historian. At least for the period under consideration, these autobiographies are models of how to maintain a public mask even when writing in the private voice. In the process, however, aspects of both public and private life go unreported—and many reported matters are suspect.

In other words, individually the autobiographies can be quite unreliable. As historical documents, they often fail to describe accurately what happened in the public career and private life of the actress; as narratives, they fail to articulate fully the social significance and personal consciousness of a professional woman in the theatre. Accordingly, theatre historians are regularly frustrated and mocked by what is reported; literary critics are disappointed by the apparent lack of self-examination. Yet collectively—in their literary, rhetorical, and social figurations of identity—these autobiographies may indeed be profoundly valuable documents, expressing, however obliquely, complex truths about actresses' lives—on and off the stage.

NOTES

1 Gerald Eades Bentley notes out that theatre scholars have identified "more than a thousand players . . . by name" for the period between 1590 and 1660 in England (The Professors of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1660 [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984], p. 4).


4 From this perspective, the commentary on Garrick's apparent "natural" acting style is significant less as a measure of realism on the stage (perhaps a misleading issue) and more as a manifestation of the cultural concern for the split sensibility.


6 Philip Highfill, Jr., "A Peep behind the Curtain: Masqu Theatrical Biography," in George Winchester Stowe, Jr., and Philip H. Highfill, Jr., In Search of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatrical Biography (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 27–38. Needless to say, the perfect illustration that documentation on performers increased decisively after the Renaissance is the scholarly project of compiling a fourteen-volume biographical dictionary on theatrical people in London between 1660 and 1800.


8 See, for example, the "seven chief qualities distinguishing the picturesque novel," in William Fehr Tweed, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Howard, A Handbook to Literature, ed. (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960). All seven traits, from
type of character and narrative voice to episodic plotting and themes of petty criminality. Is Mrs. Wells’ autobiography exemplary?

11 For a study of the generic conventions of autobiographies, see Susanna Egan, Patterns of Experience in Autobiography (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). Egan argues that the generic “stages of the written life” are lost paradise, journey or quest, conversion, and confession. These narrative patterns, related to childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, become verbal constructions: “all of them are fictions” (p. 13). This is also the conclusion that Linda H. Peterson reaches in her recent book, Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): “autobiography, supremely the most personal and individual of literary genres, is in fact a highly conventional, even prescriptive form, and . . . its generic conventions shape our way of thinking about the most private aspects of our lives” (p. 2). Avrom Fleishman notes in Figures of Autobiography: The Languages of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) that these common tropes, which derive from Saint Augustine, have continued to shape modern secular autobiographies. We should note, however, that women’s autobiographies do not conform exactly to the conventional model, nor do they usually take on the mode of the egotistical sublime of Rousseau or Wordsworth. In Estelle Jenkins’s words, many experiences are “described in heroic or exceptional terms: alienation, initiation, manhood, apotheosis, transformation, guilt, identity crisis, and symbolic journey.” Women’s experiences are less heroic as reported: “heartbreak, anger, loneliness, motherhood, humility, confusion, and self-identification” (Women’s Autobiography [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980], p. 5). While clearly sharing some of these traits, autobiographies by men and women do not quite fit within either of these categories.

12 An alternative plot that occurs is the didactic tale of the disappointed or lost life: the crucial turn is not toward success but toward failure. The narrative features hardships; the theme focuses on moral turpitude. The fault may be located in self, others, or the theocracy, which overruns an innocent or weak soul.

14 We need more studies on both audiences, especially on the general public. Who were the intended audiences in different periods? What were their sociological and economic traits? Were any of them dominated by women? If so, what does this signify, if anything? Also, what about the means of publishing: publisher, cost, distribution? What are the records on library readers, a major factor in readership since the nineteenth century? Was the autobiography extracted or serialized in a popular journal before being published as a book? These and other questions need to be asked as part of the historical investigation of these autobiographies and their meanings.

15 It would seem appropriate, for example, when reading Ethel Watts’ His Eye Is on the Sparrow (London: W. H. Allen, 1907), with its powerful descriptions of being a black performer in white America, to gauge her shifting stances as she directs her comments to (or at) blacks, whites, men, and women. The public audience for whom she writes seems to vary, depending upon the point she is making. By featuring her own struggle, she demonstrates, sometimes defiantly to whites and men, that though black women are continually victimized, she refuses to be a victim. She also seems to invite black readers, especially black women, to identify with her, to enjoy her defiance, shocking narrative of hardships faced and overcome. Her sense of self in relation to different audiences (including white women, whom she sometimes pointedly sees as a distance from herself) shapes the historical record, which is a narrative of triumph against great odds (hence the teleological function of the conclusion: her success on Broadway in a “white” play, The Member of the Wedding). 16 Paul Ricoeur, “The Narrative Function,” in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, ed. and trans. John R. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1983), pp. 276–8. See also Times and Narratives, 3 vols., trans. Kathleen Blaney and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944–1948).

17 In considering the topic of women’s autobiographies, I want to identify in a preliminary manner some of their special traits, in terms of both historical import and literary form. This is not to say that a cultural law of feminine difference controls and limits women’s writing. Nor am I suggesting that biology is destiny. However, it is undeniable that gender practices and assumptions shape psychological and social identity for men as well as women in all cultures. We should expect, then, to find gender factors in the writing of autobiography. At any rate, we should be able to identify some defining traits that occur in autobiographies by women, without having to claim that all of these traits are to be found exclusively in women’s writing or only in the period under consideration. Recurring patterns, not laws, are sought. The interpretation of these patterns is our challenge and responsibility—a task not to be ignored by male historians, however difficult it may be to undertake and complete fairly.

19 Gooden Craig, Ellen Terry and Her Secret Self (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1911), p. 54.

20 image Duncan, My Life (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927 [1928]), p. 3.

21 Duncan’s statement serves as both a commentary on previous autobiographies and a manifesto of liberation in her own case. Yet despite her Whitmanesque openness to all sensual experience, including sex, Duncan, too, passes over some of the “greater moments of joy or agony” in My Life. A comparison of her
autobiography and Francis Steegmueller's edition of her letters to Gordon Craig, The Years (New York: Random House, 1976), pp. 164–193), reveals some striking omissions in what was reported (e.g., the events surrounding her pregnancy, including her deep depression, apparent suicide attempt, and dependency upon another woman, Kathleen Bruce, who came to stay with her after receiving pleading letters). In My Life, Duncan claims, however, that Bruce's appearance was "a happy surprise" (pp. 323–329).


25 Germaine Lawrence, A Star Dommed (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1945), p. 300.


The autobiography was written after her husband died. But the title is misleading, for it is not a record of a woman living "by herself," except in the sad, self-pitying sense. She had come to feel that the whole world had unfairly abandoned and misunderstood her.


**Historiography**

A Select Bibliography

Thomas Postlewait

This three-part bibliography offers a select listing of essays and books that consider the issues, problems, methodologies, and theories of historiography. It is limited to publications in English during the last twenty years. For the most part, the bibliography supplements the sources cited in the separate essays in this collection. No attempt has been made here to compile a comprehensive listing of writings on historiography; instead a cross section of representative works is offered. These publications—as well as their bibliographies—should point the reader to additional writings on historiography and the philosophy of history. For example, see Martin Klein, Lester Stephens, and the Journal of History and Theory for extensive bibliographies.

Needless to say, by limiting this catalogue to publications of the last twenty years, I have not listed major works in historiography, from Hegel, Weber, Dilthey, Croce, and Whiffen to Bloch, Posner, Biber, Caustier, and Dworkin. Moreover, even in the case of more recent writers who have contributed to the practice and philosophy of history, such as Northrup Frye, Kenneth Burke, E. F. R.urosky, Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Fernand Braudel, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, and Michel Foucault, the listings are suggestive, not all-inclusive. My aim, therefore, is to provide a preliminary guide to current work in historiography and to suggest the range of issues and approaches open to historians. This bibliography is a starting point for investigating historiography in several fields of study, but a good researcher should move beyond it rapidly.

The first section focuses primarily on theatre historiography, with a few limited items on dance, opera, and musicology. Though I fully agree with Joseph Roach that there exists today a "needlessly parochial separation of theatre history, dance history, and musicology into discrete fields," this bibliography does not close the gap. Clearly, a comprehensive bibliography on the historiography of these inter-related fields is greatly needed. In the case of theatre history, the works by R. W. Vince should be consulted for a valuable overview of the twentieth-century approaches to the study of the separate era, from the classical age to the eighteenth century.

The line between dramatic and theatre studies is hard to draw, but for the most part this bibliography does not list studies that focus on the historiography of
LIST OF REFERENCES


